

**Whiteness, Conviviality and Agency: The Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-40) and
Conceptuality in the Imperial Imagination of Biblical Studies**

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is haunted by the vexed, yet slippery question, “why cannot the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-40 be a Jew?” Given the multivalent registers of the question, I turn to cultural studies, especially postcolonial studies, to procure analytical tools that allow me to interrogate the conceptuality of different texts, ancient and modern, that comment on the Ethiopian eunuch’s ethnoreligious agency.

In pursuit of this hermeneutic, and with the aid of scholars such as Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, Audrey Thompson, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Charles Mills, Courtney Goto, and Richard Burton, postcolonial studies is demonstrated to yield two epistemological lenses with which readings on the Ethiopian eunuch are examined: whiteness and ‘critical conviviality’. Whiteness, characterised by a Cartesian gaze, is employed in the function of deconstructing, while ‘critical conviviality’, a new hermeneutic characterised by notions of ‘collectivist hospitality’, ‘connected histories’, ‘as if’ and ‘the carnivalesque’, encourages opening one’s conceptuality in a multidimensional way, functioning to reconstruct analyses for his agency.

Upon examination of the first commentators, i.e., the early Church Fathers, the Ethiopian eunuch’s ethnoreligious agency is discovered to have shifted from an Afroasiatic Jewish one to a Graeco-Gentile one. The anti-Jewish discourse of the time as reflected by the *Adversus Judaeos* trope, functioned teleologically to aid and abet the Church Fathers’ biblical interpretations to achieve this particular religious-political ideal type. In more recent years, a Eurocentric, Cartesian gaze, framed by the logics of Euromodernity, has largely identified the Ethiopian eunuch along the spectrum of a Graeco-Roman Gentile to a not-quite-a-Jew. His being denied a Jewish identity appears to foreclose an exploration of a dynamic agency that could open up new opportunities and possibilities of (re-)conceptualising (nonrabbinic) Jewish history, Acts’s centrifugal plot, and the complex, conjunctural sites of Christian origins. Essentially, the imperial, racialised imagination cannot recognise him as a Jew because he is African, because he is black. In the final analysis, the dissertation asserts that ‘Black lives matter’ for Jewishness in the book of Acts and for Christian origins.

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DEDICATION

My beloved parents

Hilton & Mary Rhamie

whose Windrush hopes and dreams are kept alive in me

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AB</i>	<i>Anchor Bible Commentary</i>
<i>AJS Rev.</i>	<i>Association for Jewish Studies Review</i>
<i>ANF</i>	<i>The Ante-Nicene Fathers</i> . Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. 1885–1887. 10 vols. Repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994
<i>ARIEL</i>	<i>A Review of International English Literature</i>
<i>BAFCS</i>	<i>The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting</i>
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
<i>BT</i>	<i>Black Theology</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
CUA	Catholic University of America
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CPJ</i>	<i>Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum</i> . Edited by Victor A. Tcherikover. 3 vols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957–1964
<i>DBI</i>	<i>Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation</i> . Edited by John Haralson Hayes. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999
<i>Dial.</i>	Saint Justin Martyr, <i>Dialogue with Trypho</i> , trans. Falls, vol. 3 of <i>Selections from the Fathers of the Church</i> . Edited by Michael Slusser. Washington, DC: CUA Press, 2003.
<i>DLNTD</i>	<i>Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments</i>
<i>DNTB</i>	<i>Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship</i> . Edited by Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2000
<i>EAH</i>	<i>The Encyclopedia of Ancient History</i> . Edited by Roger S. Bagnall, Kai Brodersen, Craige B. Champion, Andrew Erskine, and Sabine R. Huebner. 13 vols. Malden, MA; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012
<i>EBC</i>	<i>The Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>
<i>EDNT</i>	<i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider. ET. 3 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990–1993
<i>ERS</i>	<i>Ethnic and Racial Studies</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>

<i>FC</i>	<i>Fathers of the Church Series</i> . 127 vols. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1947–
<i>F.H.N.</i>	<i>Fontes Historiae Nubiorum</i> . Edited by Tormod Eide, Tomas Hægg, Richard Holton Pierce, and Laszlo Tørøk. Bergen: University of Bergen, 1994
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>JAH</i>	<i>Journal of African History</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JBS</i>	<i>Journal of Black Studies</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of the History of Sexuality</i>
<i>JRT</i>	<i>Journal of Religious Thought</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSupp	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal for Semitic Studies</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>NPNF</i>	<i>The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i> , Series 1. Edited by Philip Schaff. 1886–1889. 14 vols. Repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
<i>NWIG</i>	<i>New West Indian Guide Nieuwe West-Indische Gids</i>
PG	Patrologia Graeca. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 162 vols. Paris, 1857–1886.
<i>PGL</i>	<i>A Patristic Greek Lexicon</i> . Edited by G. W. H. Lampe. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1969
<i>PSAm</i>	<i>Plantation Society in the Americas</i>
<i>R&T</i>	<i>Religion and Theology</i>
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBL SBS	Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study

SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SemeiaSt	Society of Biblical Literature Semeia Studies
SNTSMS	Society for the New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SymS	Symposium Series
<i>LSJ</i>	Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon: With a Revised Supplement 1996</i> . Edited by Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzie. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996
Strabo	Strabo, <i>The Geography of Strabo</i> , ed. by H. C. Hamilton, 3 vols. Medford, MA: George Bell & Sons, 1903
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>VC</i>	Vigiliae Christianae

All abbreviations of ancient texts follow: Billie Jean Collins (Project Director). *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*. 2nd ed. Atlanta: SBL, 2014.

INTRODUCTION

Every exegete is dependent – usually unreflectively and uncritically – on some conceptuality made available by tradition, and every traditional conceptuality is in one way or another dependent on some philosophy.¹
–Rudolf Bultmann

Translation of Acts 8:26-40

Greek Text (NA ²⁸)	Translation ²
<p>²⁶ Ἄγγελος δὲ κυρίου ἐλάλησεν πρὸς Φίλιππον λέγων, Ἀνάστηθι καὶ πορεύου κατὰ μεσημβρίαν ἐπὶ τὴν ὁδὸν τὴν καταβαίνουσαν ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλὴμ εἰς Γάζαν, αὕτη ἐστὶν ἔρημος.</p> <p>²⁷ καὶ ἀναστὰς ἐπορεύθη.</p> <p>καὶ ἰδοὺ ἀνὴρ Αἰθίοψ εὐνοῦχος δυνάστης Κανδάκης βασιλίσσης Αἰθιοπῶν, ὃς ἦν ἐπὶ πάσης τῆς γάζης αὐτῆς, ὃς ἐληλύθει προσκυνήσων εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ,</p> <p>²⁸ ὃν τε ὑποστρέφων καὶ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τοῦ ἅρματος αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀνεγίνωσκεν τὸν προφήτην Ἡσαΐαν.</p> <p>²⁹ εἶπεν δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα τῷ Φίλιππῳ, Πρόσελθε καὶ κολλήθητι τῷ ἅρματι τούτῳ.</p> <p>³⁰ προσδραμών δὲ ὁ Φίλιππος ἤκουσεν αὐτοῦ ἀναγινώσκοντος Ἡσαΐαν τὸν προφήτην καὶ εἶπεν, Ἀρά γε γινώσκεις ἃ ἀναγινώσκεις;</p>	<p>²⁶ Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying “Get up and go down south on the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a desert place.)</p> <p>²⁷ So he arose and went.</p> <p>And oh, an Ethiopian kinsman,³ court official eunuch of Candace, Queen-Regent of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of her entire treasury. He had gone to worship in Jerusalem,</p> <p>²⁸ and now while returning home and seated in his chariot, he was engaged in reading⁴ the prophet Isaiah.</p> <p>²⁹ Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over to this chariot and be joined to it.”</p> <p>³⁰ So, Philip, as he ran up, heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and asked, “Can you ascertain what you are reading?”</p>

¹ Rudolf Bultmann, ‘On the Problem of Demythologizing’ (1952), in *New Testament Mythology and Other Basic Writings*, ed. Schubert M. Ogden (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1984), 107.

² All New Testament (NT) translations into English are mine unless otherwise stated. Otherwise, the bible references are from NRSV. The Greek text is the Nestle-Aland 28th edition of the NT. At times, I attempt to reflect the nuances of the Greek text as closely as possible, which might at times result in a less than elegant translation. However, most times I focus on a dynamic translation to convey the subtleties of the text. The translation here will be justified on the main in the last chapter of the dissertation.

³ An argument will be made for ἀνὴρ to be translated ‘kinsman’ in section 4.3.1.2.

⁴ Ἀνεγίνωσκεν is translated as a durative (or progressive) imperfect: ‘was engaged in reading’. See section 4.2.1.5.

<p>³¹ ὁ δὲ εἶπεν, Πῶς γὰρ ἂν δυναίμην ἐὰν μὴ τις ὁδηγήσει με; παρεκάλεσέν τε τὸν Φίλιππον ἀναβάντα καθίσαι σὺν αὐτῷ.</p> <p>³² ἡ δὲ περιοχὴ τῆς γραφῆς ἣν ἀνεγίνωσκεν ἦν αὕτη</p> <p>Ὡς πρόβατον ἐπὶ σφαγὴν ἤχθη καὶ ὡς ἄμνος ἐναντίον τοῦ κείραντος αὐτὸν ἄφωνος, οὕτως οὐκ ἀνοίγει τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ.</p> <p>³³ Ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει [αὐτοῦ] ἡ κρίσις αὐτοῦ ἤρθη· τὴν γενεὰν αὐτοῦ τίς διηγήσεται; ὅτι αἴρεται ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς ἡ ζωὴ αὐτοῦ.</p> <p>³⁴ Ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ εὐνοῦχος τῷ Φιλίππῳ εἶπεν, Δέομαί σου, περὶ τίνος ὁ προφήτης λέγει τοῦτο; περὶ ἑαυτοῦ ἢ περὶ ἑτέρου τινός;</p> <p>³⁵ ἀνοίξας δὲ ὁ Φίλιππος τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ τῆς γραφῆς ταύτης εὐηγγελίσσατο αὐτῷ τὸν Ἰησοῦν.</p> <p>³⁶ ὡς δὲ ἐπορεύοντο κατὰ τὴν ὁδόν, ἦλθον ἐπὶ τι ῥῥῶν, καὶ φησιν ὁ εὐνοῦχος, Ἰδοὺ ῥῥῶν, τί κωλύει με βαπτισθῆναι;</p> <p>[³⁷ εἶπε δὲ ὁ Φίλιππος, εἰ πιστεύεις ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρσίας ἔξεστιν; ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ εἶπε, πιστεύω τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ εἶναι τὸν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν]</p> <p>³⁸ καὶ ἐκέλευσεν στῆναι τὸ ἄρμα καὶ κατέβησαν ἀμφότεροι εἰς τὸ ῥῥῶν, ὃ τε Φίλιππος καὶ ὁ εὐνοῦχος, καὶ ἐβάπτισεν αὐτόν.</p> <p>³⁹ ὅτε δὲ ἀνέβησαν ἐκ τοῦ ῥῥῶτος, πνεῦμα [ἅγιον ἐπέπεσεν ἐπὶ τὸν εὐνοῦχον, ἄγγελος δὲ] κυρίου ἤρπασεν τὸν Φίλιππον καὶ οὐκ εἶδεν αὐτὸν οὐκέτι ὁ εὐνοῦχος, ἐπορεύετο γὰρ τὴν ὁδὸν αὐτοῦ χαίρων.</p> <p>⁴⁰ Φίλιππος δὲ εὐρέθη εἰς Ἀζωτον· καὶ διερχόμενος εὐηγγελίζετο τὰς πόλεις πάσας ἕως τοῦ ἔλθεῖν αὐτὸν εἰς Καيسάρειαν.</p>	<p>³¹ And he replied, “How would I, unless someone were to guide me?” Then he invited Philip to get in and sit with him.</p> <p>³² Now, this was the passage of scripture he was reading:</p> <p>Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so, he does not open his mouth.</p> <p>³³ In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who will narrate advisedly his progeny? Since his life is taken away from the earth.</p> <p>³⁴ Then in response, the eunuch asked Philip, “About whom, if I may, is the prophet saying this? Himself or another?”</p> <p>³⁵ Then Philip, ‘opening his mouth’, and beginning from this scripture, shared with him the good news about Jesus.</p> <p>³⁶ Now, while going along the way, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What prevents me from being baptised?”</p> <p>[³⁷ And Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, it is permissible.” And he replied, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”]⁵</p> <p>³⁸ He then ordered the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip then the eunuch, went down into the water, and he baptised him.</p> <p>³⁹ Once they exited the water, the [Holy] Spirit [descended upon the eunuch, and the angel]⁶ of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, for he went on his way rejoicing.</p> <p>⁴⁰ Now Philip was found in Azotus, and as he went through all the cities, he proclaimed the good news until he came to Caesarea.</p>
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⁵ Acts 8:37 is a Western addition, not found in the early MSS tradition of *inter alia* $\mathfrak{P}^{45, 74}$ \aleph A B C 33. 81. 614. vg syr^{p, h} cop^{sa, bo} eth. But it is read, with many minor variations, by E and many minuscules, in addition to it^{gig, h} vg^{mss} syr^{h with *} cop^{G67} arm. Significantly, however, Irenaeus (late second century) attests to this edition in *AH*, 3.7.8.

⁶ Acts 8:39 is a Western addition found in A^c 323. 453. 945. 1739. 1891. 2818 / 1178 (p w sy^{h**}) mae.

Conceptuality: A Problematic Site

The Problem

This dissertation chases one slippery notion: the ethnoreligious agency of a raced literary figure. The vast majority of commentaries mistakenly conceptualise the Ethiopian Eunuch account in Acts 8.26-40 as having scant connection with the rest of Acts,⁷ adding little to the development of Luke's⁸ narrative and theology, never mind his missiology.⁹ This is largely due to its abrupt introduction and exit in Acts, giving the impression of an isolated, extraneous incident.¹⁰ F. F. Bruce acknowledges this by suggesting that 'if it were removed, there would be nothing to indicate that anything of the kind had ever stood there'.¹¹ Gerd Lüdemann tenders that the story might have been independently circulated because it bore no relation to the rest of Acts.¹² Indeed, commentators such as these appear to relegate the significance of the Ethiopian eunuch's story as a foil for more

⁷ Clarice Martin first made a similar observation in 1985 in her PhD dissertation. While her point was not about the 'conceptuality' of commentators within the academy, her point remains salient in her focus on "the history of scholarly biblical research". See Clarice Jannette Martin, 'The Function of Acts 8:26-40 within the Narrative Structure of the Book of Acts: The Significance of the Eunuch's Provenance for Acts 1:8c' (PhD diss., Duke University, 1985), vi.

⁸ Luke is denoted as the author of the Third Gospel and The Acts of the Apostles (Acts) for purposes of expediency and is not presupposed or assumed to be related to the Luke of Col. 4:14 nor 2 Tim. 4:11.

⁹ Examples from commentaries are: Richard Longenecker, 'The Acts of the Apostles', ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, *EBC* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 1:361-66; David Gooding, *True To The Faith: A Fresh Approach To The Acts of The Apostles* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), 147-52; C. K. Barratt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Acts of the Apostles*, J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield, and G. N. Stanton, ICC 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 419-36; R. F. O'Toole, 'Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts VIII 25-40)', *JSNT*, 5.17 (1983): 25-34. These texts tend to focus either on the role of Philip, the baptismal significance of the story, or an explication of the Isaiah 53 reference. Thus, it is not unusual for commentators to view the trajectory of Acts as (1) The Resurrection and the Birth of the Church (1:1-26); (2) The Ministry of the Apostles in Jerusalem (2:1-8:1); (3) The Ministry of the Apostles in Samaria and Judea (8:2-12:25); and (4) The Ministry of the Apostles and Paul to the Ends of the Earth (13:1-28:31).

¹⁰ James Scott, 'Luke's Geographical Horizon', in *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, ed. by David W. J. Gill and Conrad H. Gempf, *BAFCS*, 5 vols (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 2:533.

¹¹ F. F. Bruce, 'Philip and the Ethiopian', *JSS* 34.2 (1989): 378.

¹² Gerd Lüdemann, *The Acts of the Apostles: What Really Happened in the Earliest Days of the Church* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2005), 122.

important figures, such as Philip,¹³ Paul, and Peter.¹⁴ Even Bruce is culpable of this kind of ranking in the title of his aforementioned text, ‘Philip and the Ethiopian’.¹⁵ This begs the question as to ‘why’ and ‘so what’. Why has this pericope as a whole been by and large overlooked, neglected or sidelined as if isolated by the accident of interpolation? And, what are the consequence and implication of this negligence and omission?

Politics of Knowledge Production

One significant consequence is the politics of ignorance. By ignorance is not meant stupidity or idiocy but ‘the structural’ – that is, how the academy and its canon structure an epistemology that intuitively gives permission to ways of imagining. Such power reflects inherited ways of understanding difference and responding to alterity. As such, by choice certain kinds of knowledge are pursued in exclusion of the other. Charles Mills refers to this ignored ‘body’ of knowledge as an “epistemology of ignorance”. This is because the discursive structures of dominance exclude experiences and social knowledge of ‘Others’, thereby sustaining systematic ignorance, not only of their social realities, but of the way those of the included are constructed and privileged by the hypervisibility or invisibility of the ‘Other’.¹⁶ This then has a bearing on the politics of knowledge

¹³ W. A. Strange, *The Problem of the Text of Acts*, SNTSMS 71 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹⁴ Ernst Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1971), 308–314, appears to sideline the significance of the Ethiopian Eunuch pericope against the prominence of that of Cornelius, whom he asserts to be the first Gentile convert under the religious aegis of Peter.

¹⁵ Bruce advanced Philip as representing the Hellenist Jews whose account of the mission to the Gentiles was purportedly different to that of the official ‘church’ in Jerusalem, whose representative was Peter. Accordingly, the first Gentile convert for the Hellenist Jews was the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40) at the evangelistic behest of Philip, and the first for the Jewish ‘church’ was Cornelius (Acts 10), spearheaded by Peter.

¹⁶ Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, NY; London: Cornell University Press, 2014), 18; Charles W. Mills, *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 8–16.

production, where ‘ignorance’ is maintained through discursive omissions. An example of this could be seen in recent works on the Ethiopian eunuch.

Apart from commentaries on Acts, there have been only five major works in the Anglophone world on the Ethiopian eunuch and his story.¹⁷ They are: William Lawrence’s PhD dissertation of 1984, ‘The History of the Interpretation of Acts 8:26-40 by the Church Fathers Prior to the Fall of Rome’,¹⁸ which did not make it to book form; Clarice Martin’s PhD dissertation of 1985, ‘The Function of Acts 8:26-40 within the Narrative Structure of the Book of Acts: The Significance of the Eunuch’s Provenance for Acts 1:8c’,¹⁹ which also did not make it to book form; Mary Stachow’s PhD dissertation of 1998, “Do you Understand what you Are Reading?” (Acts 8:30): A Historical-Critical Reexamination of the Pericope of Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-40),²⁰ which again did not make it to book form; Cottrel Carson’s 1999 PhD dissertation, “Do You Understand What You are Reading?": A Reading of the Ethiopian Eunuch Story (Acts 8:26-40) from a Site of Cultural Marronage’, which also did not make it to book form;²¹ and

¹⁷ It is tempting to include in the list the seminal monograph of Gay Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference in Early Christian Literature* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002) and Arthur Francis Carter Jr, “Diaspora Poetics & (Re)Constructions of Differentness: Conceiving Acts 6.1 – 8.40 as Diaspora” (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 2016). Though Byron invokes the Ethiopian eunuch as a case study to demonstrate how colour symbolism operates in the bible vis-à-vis the Church Fathers, he is instantiated in the second half of the fifth (last) chapter. However, Byron’s text will be looked at for its hermeneutic of ethnopoliitics later in this chapter. Carter’s text on the other hand, briefly handles the Ethiopian eunuch as part of a larger scheme of a diaspora studies approach, which heuristically shows how relationships, identities and memory are maintained, even subsequent to boundary crossings.

¹⁸ William F. Lawrence, ‘The History of the Interpretation of Acts 8:26-40 by the Church Fathers Prior to the Fall of Rome’ (PhD diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1984).

¹⁹ Martin, ‘The Function of Acts 8:26-40 in Acts’. Martin’s PhD is prolifically quoted by New Testament scholars. There is a spin-off article published. See Clarice Martin, ‘A Chamberlain’s Journey and the Challenge of Interpretation for Liberation’, in *Interpretation for Liberation*, eds. Katie Geneva Cannon and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Semeia 47 (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 1989), 105–35.

²⁰ Mary Ann Stachow, “Do you Understand what you Are Reading?” (Acts 8:30): A Historical-Critical Reexamination of the Pericope of Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-40) (PhD diss., The Catholic University of America, 1998).

²¹ Cottrel R. Carson, “Do You Understand What You Are Reading?": A Reading of the Ethiopian Eunuch Story (Acts 8:26-40) from a Site of Cultural Marronage’ (PhD diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1999), 12.

finally, Sean Burke's 2013 monograph, *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch: Strategies of Ambiguity in Acts*,²² which is a publication of his 2009 PhD dissertation.

The failure of four out of five select PhDs on the Ethiopian eunuch to make it to book form should not go amiss – this is notwithstanding that many dissertations in the guild are not published. But these PhDs are focussed on a figure that occupies the second largest conversion story in the book of Acts outside that of the Apostle Paul. A cursory search online for monographs on figures such as Simon Magus, Cornelius, Lydia, and Stephen yield far many more hits than the *one* for the Ethiopian eunuch. As such, the politics of the economy of knowledge production may account for the marginalising of the scoping of the Ethiopian eunuch for the book of Acts. This begs the question: is there a larger and structural force at play in repressing the agency, materiality and efficacy of Acts 8:26-40?

Although to answer this question meticulously is outside the scope of this dissertation, it does seem to feed into a stream of repeated findings: that the black body of the Ethiopian eunuch appears to present an anomaly to different readerships, especially from an identity politics perspective²³ of gender and

²² Sean D. Burke, *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch: Strategies of Ambiguity in Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013).

²³ “The term ‘identity politics’ refers to activism engaged in by status-based social movements organized around such categories as gender, race/ethnicity, and sexuality, in contrast to class-based movements. The term also applies to any mobilization related to politics, culture, and identity”, Mary Bernstein and Verta Taylor, ‘Identity Politics’, ed. by David A. Snow and others, *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2013), 1. For a critique of identity politics see, Kimberlé Crenshaw, ‘Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color’, *Stanford Law Review* 43.6 (1991): 1241–1299; Craig Calhoun, ‘Social Theory and the Politics of Identity’, in *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*, ed. by Craig Calhoun (Oxford; Cambridge, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1994), 9–36; Liz Bondi, ‘Locating Identity Politics’, in *Place and the Politics of Identity*, ed. by Michael Keith and Steve Pile (London; New York: Routledge, 2004), 82–99.

sexuality,²⁴ race,²⁵ disability,²⁶ and migration.²⁷ In light of this, it will be understood why Lawrence, Martin,²⁸ Stachow, Carson and Burke, or others such as Wilson,²⁹ Witherington,³⁰ Johnson³¹ and Byron,³² for example, do not go far enough in their discursive operations to diagnose and analyse the conceptual gaze of the different readerships. Moreover, the five aforementioned texts do not particularly argue for the ethnoreligious status of the Ethiopian eunuch but *assume* that he is a Gentile. Therefore, they will be invoked for their epistemological worth later in the dissertation. For example, Burke will be

²⁴ Notwithstanding Sean Burke's monograph, see, David Brakke, 'Ethiopian Demons: Male Sexuality, the Black-Skinned Other, and the Monastic Self', *JHS* 10.3/4 (2001): 501–535; Marianne B. Kartzow and Halvor Moxnes, 'Complex Identities: Ethnicity, Gender and Religion in the Story of the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26–40)', *R&T* 17.3–4 (2010): 184–204; Brittany E. Wilson, "Neither Male nor Female": The Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8:26–40', *New Testament Studies*, 60.03 (2014): 403–422; Brittany E. Wilson, *Unmanly Men: Refigurations of Masculinity in Luke-Acts* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 113–49; Emma Percy, 'Can a Eunuch Be Baptized? Insights for Gender Inclusion from Acts 8', *Theology*, 119.5 (2016): 327–334; Aaron Perry, 'Lift Up the Lowly and Bring Down the Exalted: Gender Studies, Organizations, and the Ethiopian Eunuch', *Journal of Religious Leadership* 14.1 (2015): 45–66; Reta Halteman Finger, "What Is to Prevent Me from Being Baptized?" Philip's Encounter with the Ethiopian Eunuch: A Bible Study', *Sojourners Magazine* 43.4 (2014): 35–37; Annette Weissenrieder, 'Searching for the Middle Ground from the End of the Earth: The Embodiment of Space in Acts 8:26–40', *Neotestamentica* 48.1 (2014): 115–161.

²⁵ Scott Shauf, 'Locating the Eunuch: Characterization and Narrative Context in Acts 8:26–40', *CBQ* 71.4 (2009): 762–75; F. Scott Spencer, 'The Ethiopian Eunuch and His Bible: A Social-Science Analysis', *BTB* 22.4 (1992): 155–165.

²⁶ Anna Rebecca Solevåg, 'No Nuts? No Problem! Disability, Stigma, and the Baptized Eunuch in Acts 8:26–40', *BibInt* 24.1 (2016): 81–99.

²⁷ Zorodzai Dube, 'The Ethiopian Eunuch in Transit: A Migrant Theoretical Perspective', *HTS Theological Studies* 69.1 (2013): 1–7.

²⁸ While Martin's ethnographic identity of the Ethiopian is telling and accurate (Martin, 'The Function of Acts 8:26–40 in Acts', 107–14), her analysis does not take into account anthropological questions.

²⁹ Stephen G. Wilson, *The Gentiles and the Gentile Mission in Luke-Acts*, SNTSMS, 23 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 171–78.

³⁰ Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Carlisle, UK: Eerdmans, 1998), 291–301. Like the majority of commentaries, Witherington, prevaricates over the ethnoreligious identity of the Ethiopian eunuch (pp. 292–93). On the one hand, Witherington asserts that the Ethiopian eunuch cannot be a proselyte because he was "castrated and ... dismembered" (p. 296). On the next, he had expressly gone to worship in Jerusalem because Ethiopians are reputedly pious (p. 296, n. 65). But then, he is probably a Gentile, but "he falls into that more fringe category of some sort of God-fearer" (p. 296, n. 64), or "on the fringes of Judaism" (p. 280).

³¹ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Sacra Pagina 5 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 153–61.

³² Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference*.

addressed later in this chapter and Stachow in the next. Their value in terms of the conventional 'literature review' is creatively examined within their literary location when tracing the dominant epistemologies that are employed in conceptualising the ethnic other. Lawrence and Carson, on the other hand, will be addressed in chapter 2, since they both deal with the Church Fathers. This innovative move is due to the multidisciplinary nature of the dissertation in its attempt to grapple with the phenomenon of the epistemological gaze.

A Supreme Conceptuality

Drawing from Rudolf Bultmann's aforementioned quote – he is widely regarded as the foremost New Testament scholar of the twentieth century – conceptuality as a state of imagining, creative thinking, and understanding particular aspects of reality, is largely reliant on and fed by tradition even in its most expansive, creative mode. Yet, tradition itself tends to universality and dominance. This is why tradition determines and fixes the interpretative, asymmetrical gaze of the exegete.³³

³³ Discussions on the notion of the gaze abounds. Premier among them is Homi Bhabha's discussion on the British colonial 'seeing' and discourse. See Homi K Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004 [1994]), 66–92. See further his discussion on the perspectives of the 'English gentleman' contrasted with the 'new national modes of . . . interpreting and speaking the Negro' in 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation', in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London; New York: Routledge, 1990), 291–320. On the ideological notion of the gaze, see the chapter on 'Panopticism' in Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 195–308; the chapter on 'Seeing and Knowing', in Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, trans. by A. M. Sheridan (London: Routledge, 1976 [1963]), 107–23; and, see the chapter on 'The Eye of Power', in Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 146–165. For an excellent discussion on the genealogy of the gaze as it pertains to race and whiteness, see the two essays: Bettina G. Bergo, "Circulez! Il N'y a Rien à Voir," Or, "Seeing White": From Phenomenology to Psychoanalysis and Back' (125–69), and George Yancy, "Seeing Blackness" from within the Manichean Divide' (233–63), in *White on White / Black on Black*, ed. George Yancy (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005). Although I agree that "the gaze is always bound up with power, domination and eroticization," T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *Black Venus: Sexualized Savages, Primal Fears, and Primitive Narratives in French* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 34, later on I develop the notion further by suggesting that the actual gaze I will be critiquing is also a Cartesian performative act.

The gaze then is, of course, a way of looking – “a regime of looking”³⁴ – calculating, ordering, classifying. It is not one-way (even though the one gazing may think so), for with the gaze there is increasing self-awareness of ‘the Other’ and of oneself – whether to one’s benefit or detriment. But its dominance ensures asymmetry because it more often than not objectifies and homogenises its subject as fixed, immutable and permanent. Bultmann seems to acknowledge the porosity and dependence of conceptuality: that it is ultimately subjected to ‘some philosophy’. He goes on to argue that the exegete must therefore search for the “right [kind of] philosophy” in order to reorientate the tradition that determines one’s conceptuality,³⁵ and which, in turn, I would argue, determines one’s (normalising) gaze. In which case, the gaze is an ideological gaze – a gaze formed from the vortex of political, cultural and religious interests.

Bultmann is not really interested in the gaze, the nature, effect or power of the gaze. This is because his ‘right kind of philosophy’, albeit an existentialist one, is universalised as the normative philosophy – a modern normative, which at the behest of the Enlightenment, is, in fact, a white, European, hegemonic ‘philosophy’ devoid of any Eastern influence.³⁶ Such a normative gaze, not only

³⁴ Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks, *Desiring Whiteness: A Lacanian Analysis of Race* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), 2.

³⁵ Bultmann, ‘On the Problem of Demythologizing’, 107. Bultmann was stridently opposed to objectifying theology – especially objectifying belief in Jesus. However, his insistence on finding the ‘right philosophy’ applies to ascertaining the correct abstract reality or the principle of such an existence, keeping in mind that the actual objectification of existence will be the lived reality of that existence. In other words, the ‘right philosophy’ is the right philosophical outlook necessary for theological study. This right kind of philosophy resists being materialised as ‘right philosophy’, yet does not adequately answer the question: who determines what the right kind of philosophy should be? Bultmann may say that it is the actual existential contingencies that invoke the right kind of philosophy. However, contingencies are material and concrete, for one, and require a particular informed individual to appropriate the proper philosophy, for two. Such appropriation becomes, I suggest, the normalising gaze.

³⁶ In Shawn Kelley, *Racializing Jesus: Race, Ideology and the Formation of Modern Biblical Scholarship* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), 129–64, Kelley painstakingly makes the point that Bultmann, in the shadow of Heideggerian existentialism, constructs a philosophy that seeks to strip the making and posterity of Christianity of as much Jewish influence as possible, since in Bultmann’s view, this is what Jesus, and later Paul, endeavoured to do. Consequently, Bultmann’s hermeneutical tool of demythologising, for Kelley, is essentially a racialised one. For more on the effects of antisemitism on theology, see Anders Gerdmar, *Roots*

the existentialist gaze, often goes unquestioned and has dominated western biblical scholarship on, not least, biblical texts.³⁷ This is, again, because ideological interests determine the normative gaze. In which case, it begs the question: does Bultmann's reasoning reflect the kind of production of the normative, exacting philosophy for which the biblical studies guild trades on? If it does, then this ideal, Eurocentric philosophy³⁸ – or philosophies, in that there are several competing philosophies, even Bultmann's philosophy – induces a gaze that can be destructive because it is, in part, riddled with Cartesian blind spots.³⁹ That is, blind spots, which are racialised, deodorised and clinicalised. I think Bultmann is lending some credence to the use of conceptuality as a function of framing thinking. In which case, it will be demonstrated in this dissertation that epistemes are the building blocks of conceptuality and are themselves hinged on the materiality of the reader's context.

Could it be, then, that the failure of the majority of scholars to lend creative, conceptual value to the Ethiopian eunuch's story, despite its imposing length,

of Theological Anti-Semitism: German Biblical Interpretation and the Jews, from Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

³⁷ Vincent L. Wimbush, 'Interpreters—Enslaving/Enslaved/Runagate', *JBL* 130.1 (2011): 5–24. In 2010, Wimbush was the first person of colour to be president of the signal association of the biblical studies guild, the Society of Biblical Literature. This article is his presidential speech where he challenges the dominant readings of the West as imperialistic: "With its fetishization of the rituals and games involving books and THE BOOK, its politics of feigning apolitical ideology, it's still all too simple historicist agenda (masking in too many instances unacknowledged theological-apologetic interests), its commitment to "sticking to the text," its orientation in reality has always contributed to and reflected a participation in "sticking it" to the gendered and racialized Others. The fragility of the fiction of the apolitical big tent holding us together is all too evident in the still mind-numbingly general and vapid language we use to describe our varied practices and ideologies and orientations" (p. 7).

³⁸ A Eurocentric perspective is not the issue per se, but its universalisation and imposition of European history, epistemological experience and knowledge production on non-European peoples and societies at the expense of the worldviews, histories and epistemology of those societies.

³⁹ Cartesian anthropology is probably best captured in Descartes's famous quote in *Meditationes* (1642), "by the divine power, the mind can exist without the body, and the body without the mind" – René Descartes, *Meditations, Objections, and Replies*, trans. by Roger Ariew and Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2006). Cf. Theresa H. Pfeifer, 'Deconstructing Cartesian Dualisms of Western Racialized Systems: A Study in the Colors Black and White', *JBS* 39.4 (2009): 528–547.

have something to do with what Shawn Kelley refers to as a “racialized discourse” where the emergent philosophical ideas of the Enlightenment broached by its orderlies, Hegel and Heidegger, tended to render the literary presence of, and later contributions by scholars of colour, as inconsequential?⁴⁰ If so, then this would have had the unwitting but sustained ideological effect of overlooking the vitality and fuller significance of Acts 8:26-40. His black body might just present a hyper-stimulus obstruction to the conceptuality of the mainstay of the discipline. In which case, a countervailing, emancipatory reading strategy is required to help rescue the text from myopic readings and thereby rehabilitate the imposing stature of the Ethiopian eunuch.

An Ethnoreligious Construct

Due to the overwhelming neglect of the ‘blackness’ of his agency by the conceptuality of different readerships, I am interested in the research question: why cannot the Ethiopian eunuch be conceived or imagined as a fully-fledged Jew? I acknowledge that if he were a convert to Judaism,⁴¹ halakhically he would be deemed a fully-fledged Jew. However, by ‘fully-fledged Jew’ is meant a Jew of Hebrew lineage. In league with his Africanness, I am reading the question as an ethnoreligious one, not merely an ethnic, racial or ethno-biological one.

My choice of the compound formulation ‘ethnoreligious’ is not an easy choice, because of the contentious fluidity and malleability of the notion of race and

⁴⁰ Kelley, *Racializing Jesus*, 30.

⁴¹ I acknowledge that as an ‘-ism’ Judaism is a pejorative appellative invented by Christian modernity as an ‘anti-Judaism’. See particularly chapter 13, ‘Modernity Thinks with Judaism’, in David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York; London: W. W. Norton, 2013), 423–60. See further Daniel Boyarin, *Judaism: The Genealogy of a Modern Notion* (New Brunswick, NJ; London: Rutgers University Press, 2018). Boyarin asserts that given the absence of both the notion of ‘religion’ and the term, ‘Judaism’, in premodern Jewish sources, then “from a linguistic point of view, only modern Judaism can be said to exist at all” (p. xi). Only relatively recently has ‘Judaism’ been reclaimed by Jews as a self-definition. It is in this sense that the term is used.

ethnicity. As will be seen later in chapter 1, Euromodernity⁴² has conceptually sought to reify these categories as fixed and immutable. However, this was not the case in antiquity, especially in the first century,⁴³ even arguably as now. Therefore, whatever term I adopt has to resist all attempts of the neat hermetic distinctions that a Euromodern conceptuality might insist upon, especially between notions of religion and ethnicity. Yet, it has to be tied to the aspect of the Ethiopian eunuch's agency on which I am focussing as expressed in his story of Acts 8:26-40.

Consequently, I am suggesting as an initial contestation of a Euromodern sensibility that the category of 'ethnoreligion' in contradistinction to ethnicity – or race for that matter – inheres the complexity and mutability of both notions of ethnicity and race at the same time. In so doing, its use will take into account the immersive and unconscious universality of religion back then. This is religion not in the sense of denominations with set categories of doctrinal beliefs, but in the sense of belief systems in a higher, external power. In antiquity, ethnicity was indistinguishable from religion.⁴⁴

⁴² I am using 'Euromodernity' in the sense that Lewis Gordon gives it: "The term simply means the constellation of convictions, arguments, policies, and a worldview promoting the idea that the only way legitimately to belong to the present and as a consequence the future is to be or become European. It places 'European' as a necessary condition of belonging, continuation, and selfhood – features of all Modernities – which, in effect, relegates those who do not fit either to the past or to kinds of nowhere and no-man's-land," in Gordon, 'Black Aesthetics, Black Value', *Public Culture* 30.1 (2018): 20. I am suggesting further, however, that 'Euromodernity' is constituted by an Cartesian episteme (see section 1.3.7). Nevertheless, when 'modernity' is used it focuses on the historical era as materially constituted by enslavement and colonialism.

⁴³ All dates refer to the Common Era (CE) unless otherwise stated.

⁴⁴ The compartmentalisation of ethnicity from one's religion is a Euromodern phenomenon, due in part to an individualistic view of self at the behest of the Enlightenment that creatively imagined religion and ethnicity as distinctly separate, as in the case of the quest for the historical Jesus. The dichotomising of Jesus's history from his religion likely gave birth to the quest of the historical Jesus in nineteenth and early twentieth century Germany, primarily set off by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's publication of Hermann Samuel Reimarus's work. For a comprehensive overview see Dieter Georgi, 'The Interest in Life of Jesus Theology as a Paradigm for the Social History of Biblical Criticism', *HTR* 85.1 (1992): 51–83; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation* (New York: Continuum, 2001); David B. Gowler, 'The Quest for the Historical Jesus: An Overview', in *The Blackwell Companion to Jesus*, ed. by Delbert Burkett (Malden, MA; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 301–18; *Handbook for the Study of the Historical*

To separate history from religion is to apply anachronistic epistemologies onto the ancient world. Our modern notion of ‘religion’ at any rate is at best an approximation. The ‘ethnoreligious’ designate is a more appropriate etic category⁴⁵ and will be employed in this dissertation as a composite, floating signifier,⁴⁶ understanding that its ethnic and religious accents amorphously shift in relation to each other and are contingent on its context. Therefore, when the question is posed, ‘why cannot the Ethiopian be a fully-fledged Jew?’ it is not merely a question of religious identity, but of ethnoreligious agency, which is determined by, to borrow Segovia’s term, “the optic” of the reader.⁴⁷

I say ‘agency’⁴⁸ in interplay with ‘identity’⁴⁹ because identity is often essentialised as fixed. And if it is not seen as fixed it normally focuses attention on the ‘normalising’ essence of the subjectivity. On the other hand, agency focuses not so much on the instrumentalisation of the Ethiopian eunuch’s subjectivity and

Jesus, ed. by Tom Holmen and Stanley E. Porter, vols. 1–4 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011). While the majority of scholarship disagrees with this cleavage between history and religion, there are still others who maintain a separation of sorts. See, for example, the extensive work of John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 5 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991–2016).

⁴⁵ As such, ‘religion’ is an etic, anachronistic category, and perhaps redundant. For an explanation of the etic, see Marvin Harris, ‘History and Significance of the Emic/Etic Distinction’, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 5 (1976): 329–50. That is not to say that etic categories cannot be heuristically deployed to help explain indistinct notions.

⁴⁶ The notion of a “floating signifier” is taken from Stuart Hall in a video recorded Lecture. Stuart Hall, ‘Race: A Floating Signifier’, Interview by Sut Jhully, Videotape Lecture (Nottingham: Media Education Foundation), 1996. The point here is like race, whiteness shifts and slides in its appropriation contingent on its historical circumstances. See further, Stuart Hall, *The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity and Nation*, ed. by Kabena Mercer (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2017), 64–5.

⁴⁷ ‘Mapping the Postcolonial Optic in Biblical Criticism: Meaning and Scope’, in *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections*, eds. Stephen D. Moore and Fernando F. Segovia (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 23–78. Although Segovia does not spell out the definition of optic – neither does he do this in his earlier monograph in Fernando F. Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), particularly 119–33 – it might be fair to suggest that what is meant here is a prism of perception and interpretation, which, in our case, might ignore, be blind to, and exclude, with potentially devastating results.

⁴⁸ By agency is meant the capacity of the Ethiopian eunuch for creative, determinative expression as determined by the reader.

⁴⁹ By identity is meant the different dimensions in which the Ethiopian eunuch is prescribed by the reader.

the attendant meanings, even though instrumentality is a constitutive of agency. It focuses significantly on (the potential of) his capability of performance, which may invite considerations for the politics of his identity. In other words, agency is the political dynamic that the Ethiopian eunuch may have for questions on origins, purity and mission.⁵⁰ Then what is he capable of being and doing in the text to successive readerships? Only a critical methodology can help here to deconstruct conceptual readings of his identity and agency. In which case, the use of identity and agency will coincide, overlap and interchange in this dissertation according to the point being made.

An Ethnoreligious Identity

Nevertheless, studies on the Ethiopian eunuch and his story have generally shifted across four categories of agency: baptism, religion, sexuality and ethnicity. The first is the utility of the story as a function of baptism and mission apologetics.⁵¹ This group tends to privilege the work of Philip, the evangelist, in his proselytisation of the Ethiopian eunuch and the significance of the Isaiah scriptural quote (Isa. 53:7, 8) for missions.⁵² The second group of studies is on the religious status of the Ethiopian eunuch, which does not seriously ruminate over notions of ethnoreligious identity.⁵³ The third group of studies, the politics

⁵⁰ More will be said about the politics of identity in the next chapter.

⁵¹ Lawrence, 'Interpretation by the Church Fathers', surveys the catechetical function of baptism in the Church Fathers.

⁵² For texts privileging Philip's role in the conversation of the Ethiopian eunuch, see: Christopher R. Matthews, *Philip: Apostle and Evangelist: Configurations of a Tradition* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2002); F. Scott Spencer, *The Portrait of Philip in Acts: A Study of Roles and Relations*, JSNTSup, 67 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997). For texts on the significance of the Isaiah quote, see Thomas L. Brodie, 'Towards Unraveling the Rhetorical Imitation of Sources in Acts: 2 Kgs 5 as One Component of Acts 8,9-40', *Biblica*, 67.1 (1986): 41-67; Raymond de Hoop, 'The Interpretation of Isaiah 56:1-9: Comfort or Criticism?', *JBl* 127.4 (2008): 671-695. For texts on the baptism and confession of the Ethiopian eunuch, see James M Gibbs, 'Luke 24:13-33 And Acts 8:26-39: The Emmaus Incident and the Eunuch's Baptism as Parallel Stories', *Bangalore Theological Forum*, 7.1 (1975): 17-30; Strange, *The Problem of the Text of Acts*, 69-76; Fred L. Horton and Jeffrey A. Blakely, "'Behold, Water" Tell El-Hesi and the Baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch', *Revue Biblique*, 107.1 (2000): 56-71.

⁵³ For texts on the Gentile identity of the Ethiopian eunuch without serious recourse to ethnoreligious regard, see Martin, 'The Function of Acts 8:26-40 within the Narrative Structure of the Book of Acts', 109;

of the Ethiopian eunuch's sexuality, has enjoyed the most recent upsurge of interest.⁵⁴ However, the fourth and last group, the ethnoreligious identity (and agency), has witnessed the least amount of in-depth investigation. The premier text that comes closest to addressing seriously the ethnoreligious identity of the Ethiopian eunuch is Byron's *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference*, pp. 109–21 – the second section of the last chapter – which weighs in on a Gentile identity. Craig Keener's *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, also tenders a fairly modest attempt at parsing the ethnoreligious identity of the Ethiopian eunuch.⁵⁵ We will look at these in turn, although Byron's text will be given more attention given its affinity to some of the socio-political concerns of this dissertation.

Gay Byron: Ethnopolitics and the Model of Virtue

Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference in Early Christian Literature, a 2002 text, purports to “examine some of the discursive uses of Egyptians/Egypt, Ethiopians/Ethiopia, and Blacks/blackness through the development of a taxonomy of what will be called *ethno-political rhetorics*”.⁵⁶ In effect, it looks at the use of ethnicity as a polemical device in the five hundred years of the Patristic period to establish “how symbolic language both reflects and defines certain perceptions about religious, social and political realities”.⁵⁷

Richard B. Rackham, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Exposition* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003 [1901]), 123; F. Scott Spencer, ‘The Ethiopian Eunuch and His Bible: A Social-Science Analysis’, *BTB* 22.4 (1992): 155, although Spencer uses the Isaiah quote to establish the liminality of the Ethiopian eunuch; Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference*, 111; Paul Nadim Tarazi, *The New Testament: An Introduction*, 2 vols (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999), 2:218.

⁵⁴ On the politics of gender and sexuality identity with respect to the Ethiopian eunuch, see Kartzow and Moxnes, ‘Complex Identities’; Burke, *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch*; Christopher B. Zeichmann, ‘Gender Minorities In and Under Roman Power: Respectability Politics in Luke–Acts’, in *Luke–Acts: Texts@Contexts*, ed. by James P. Grimshaw (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 61–73.

⁵⁵ Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: Introduction and 1:1–247* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 2:1565–67.

⁵⁶ Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference*, 7, original emphasis.

⁵⁷ Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference*, 7.

This text, which instantiates the reading of the Ethiopian eunuch story within a racialised discourse, is important for this dissertation for at least four reasons. Firstly, it sets up an analytical tool, ‘ethnopolitical rhetorics’, to critique the Patristic writings for their ‘ethnic othering’ of all things black. This is similar to this dissertation’s adoption of ‘ethnic reasoning’⁵⁸ as the analytical tool to assess the Patristic writings for their co-optation of the ethnoreligious identity of the Ethiopian eunuch. Secondly, its reading of the Graeco-Roman use of colour symbolism provides an opportunity to clarify its utility as different between the biblical and post-biblical cannon period – a point that is equivocated in the text – especially since it runs parallel to the rhetorical pattern of the *Adversus Judaeos* tradition of the same period.⁵⁹ Thirdly, it (incorrectly) claims through the pietistic reading of the Church Fathers that the ethnoreligious identity of the Ethiopian eunuch was that of a Gentile, and that his agency was effectively neutered by Luke. Fourthly, it succeeds in demonstrating how many modern interpretations of ancient citations of blackness and its cognates are laden with their own ideological interests, as is evident in their mistranslations of the original Greek and Latin, where, in turn, inconsistencies in conclusions are drawn.⁶⁰ This pattern is also observable in this dissertation (see sections 2.3.1.2.1 and 4.3.1.1). Indeed, symbolic language, then as now, continues to shape (even inflame) attitudes, beliefs and values and no less in the academy.

⁵⁸ Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2005), 6. Ethnic reasoning is similar to Byron’s ethno-political rhetorics, which she defines as: “discursive elements within texts that refer to ‘ethnic’ identities or geographical locations and function as political invective”. See Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference*, 2.

⁵⁹ The *Adversus Judaeos* (*Against Jews*) trope developed into a major anti-Jewish discourse during the Patristic period. We will look at this tradition in some detail in the next chapter to demonstrate its role in the obfuscation of the ethnoreligious identity of the Ethiopian eunuch.

⁶⁰ Byron demonstrates further: (i) inconsistencies in the uses and citations of ancient ethnic categories and skin colour among modern scholarship; (ii) an over-positive (idealised) representation among scholars in the portrayal of ancient blacks; (iii) a lack of critical interest in ethnic groups, geographical locations, and colour symbols as a source for understanding the NT; and (iv) under-representation of studies of black women in antiquity, Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference*, 4–8.

While Part 1 of the text looks at “Developing a Taxonomy of Ethno-Political Rhetoric”, Part 2 embarks upon “Reading Ethno-Political Rhetorics in Early Christian Literature”⁶¹ and is subdivided into three chapters that canvass the way ‘black’ and ‘blackness’ have been spiritualised and caricatured in mostly pejorative ways.⁶² For example, whilst in the literature Egyptian women are imagined both as beautiful and seductive, they are virtually in the same breath demonic, and or sinful.⁶³ The text builds on the work of Lloyd Thompson,⁶⁴ by suggesting that not only did black symbolism feed into the fear, superstition and tyranny of the Graeco-Romans, given the privileging of their own somatic form (phenotype) as normative (Thompson) over and against blacks (*vide* Desert Father’s writings), but it fed the practices, beliefs and values of them also. Black symbolism, whether in terms of abstract colour or ethnic identity (and the two were not necessarily mutually exclusive), was spiritualised as evil and in need of erasure.⁶⁵

⁶¹ The entire text is divided into two parts. Part 1, “Developing a Taxonomy of Ethno-Political Rhetoric”, is divided into two chapters (pp. 15–52), charting an interdisciplinary epistemological framework for Part 2 (three chapters), where citations of ethno-political rhetorics in early Christian literature are examined more closely. The tripartite methodology of socio-rhetorical, ethnocentric and gender criticism – broadly referred to as ethno-political criticism – is canvassed in chapter 1. Important to this is the nuanced reading of ‘black’, where it could mean an ethnic group, a proper name, a colour or ethnic identity, whereas ‘blackness’ refers to colour symbolism (p. 23). Chapter 2 explores this representation of black and blackness in the Patristic writers. Byron’s critical engagement with classicists and ancient historians uncovers huge inconsistencies within the reading of colour-coded language in the Greco-Roman world. This is made possible through her two taxonomies, one for non-Christians and the other for Christians. Notwithstanding the inevitable overlap, the taxonomy for non-Christians is as follows:

1. Geopolitical identification, with five subdivisions: a) geographical location, b) mythical idealization, c) Ethiopian-Scythian antithesis, d) economic and military domain, e) social and political status (p. 30–35).
2. Moral-spiritual characterization, with five subdivisions: a) character description, b) colour symbolism, c) demons and evil, d) models of “virtue”, e) sexual threats (pp. 35–38).
3. Descriptive differentiation, with three subdivisions: a) physical description, b) name or title, c) aesthetic sensibilities (pp. 39–41).

Although the Christian texts largely follow this framework, an important revision is “Christian self-definition”, by which Christian groups of the centre (orthodox) identify and exclude other Christian groups of the periphery (non-orthodox), (pp. 41–50).

⁶² Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference*, 53–129.

⁶³ Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference*, 94–103.

⁶⁴ Lloyd A. Thompson, *Romans and Blacks* (Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 1989).

⁶⁵ The texts drawn upon can be largely divided between the Apostolic Fathers (chiefly, *Epistle of Barnabas*

In effect, the Egyptian and Ethiopian ethnic identity as Black symbolising sin was borrowed from sin's association with abstract blackness among the Apostolic Fathers and in time developed a hypersexual meaning culminating in the figure of the Ethiopian woman among the Desert Fathers. I believe that this developmental trajectory is not made sufficiently clear.⁶⁶ Hence, a critical point is lacking: that the NT corpus appears to resist being co-opted into this early Christian discursive strategy of using black and its cognates – abstract and ethnic – vituperatively as an ethnic signifier.⁶⁷ NT uses colour symbolism of black and

and *Shepherd of Hermas* in chapter 3), Early Church Fathers (namely, Tertullian, Origen, Jerome and Augustine in chapter 3), and the later third to sixth centuries monastic literature (for example, *Apophthegmata Patrum* [*Sayings of the Fathers*], Antony and anchoritic monks, Athanasius, Cassian, Palladius, Rufinus and Gregory of Elvira). The monograph, however, does not draw from these sources in this chronological order.

⁶⁶ The method for organising the material does not easily help with seeing a crucial trajectory in the development of colour symbolism over the first five centuries. Granted, there is admission, albeit in a couple of oblique endnotes – Introduction, n. 69, p. 138 and Conclusion, n. 4 p. 174 – that the argumentation develops around rhetorics generated by a constructed taxonomy rather than diachronically along historical lines, since the rhetorics overlap different eras. But reconstructed diachronically, the trajectory of the usage of blackness (and its cognate terms) within Christian texts might yield a clearer development from abstract colour symbolism in the Old Testament (OT) and New Testament (NT), to ethical symbolism as a referent to sin and its constituent vices in Apostolic literature, to ethnopollitical symbolism with its fixation on phenotype and skin colour and as a referent to sin and its constituent vices in the Patristic literature, through to sexual, ethnopollitical symbolism with its fixation on ethnicity and skin colour in Desert Fathers literature.

⁶⁷ In discussing the ethnopollitical rhetorics of the derived usages of the term “black” and designations “Egyptian” and “Ethiopian”, the argument could have included an important nuance. It is careful to make a distinction between the Apostolic Fathers and later writings, noting that while colour symbolism “played an important role in the imaginations of early Christian writers” (p. 69), i.e. among the Apostolic Fathers especially as a form of resistance, it was not used as an ethnic signifier until later writings. Yet, this point appears somewhat obfuscated. If anything, it is undermined by the suggestion that the author of *Epistle of Barnabas*, a document of the Apostolic Fathers, “may have been influenced by either the real or imaginative presence of Ethiopians and Blacks in Alexandria” (p. 65). This claim is not amply justifiable, since the phrase, ὁ μέλας, referring to the Evil One in Epist. of Barn 4:9; 20:1, cannot be demonstrated to designate Egyptians and Ethiopians in any of its contemporary writings. Furthermore, it is nigh impossible to extrapolate from the OT and NT any symbolic use of μέλας and its cognates as denoting sin or suchlike. This all too significant point is absent from the argument.

It is true that in the *Epistle of Barnabas* the definite article, ὁ, problematises the reading of μέλας since it posits the figure in the text as “the Black One”, an antitype to Satan as “the evil one”. However, there is no similar reference pointing to an ethnic figure in contemporary sources. With the stark absence of such a comparison for another two to three centuries, the figure can best be attested to as an abstract dark figure (possibly wearing dirty soiled clothes, for example, but certainly pointing to Satan), with no vital prototype in an Egyptian or Ethiopian. The insistence on making an ethnic link may either stem from reading the ὁ μέλας of the fifth century *Vita Melaniae Junioris*, who is evidently identified later in the text as the Black young man (ὁ μέλανα νεανίσκον), back into the *Epistle*, or, worse still, may risk applying modern common usages of ‘colour’ back into the first/second century document as an ethnic identifier – an anachronism she

white ethically without ethnic (material) reference. This distinction is lost due in part to the organisation of the text's argument.⁶⁸

As Byron indicates, even Egyptians, turned to their proximate 'other', the Ethiopians, despite their own dark skin, and demonised them.⁶⁹ Ironically, it is in Egypt that the demon is Ethiopianised! This is another nuance apparently missed, given that the Ethiopian's skin is colonised, as it were, by being instrumentalised.⁷⁰

This allusion to pigmentation as an ethnic identifier leads me to my next point. While the text persuasively examines the symbolic usages of blackness as part of an ethnopolitical and rhetorical strategy for spiritualising sin – especially with respect to Ethiopia/Egypt – it does not sufficiently problematise its counterpoint, whiteness, as historical to the argument.⁷¹ This is probably because whiteness as

herself would be wary of making (p. 23).

⁶⁸ This tendency to not systematise the contextualisation of certain works deprives the reader of the vantage of seeing the development of the works of the authors in the scheme of things. For example, when introducing the desert monks, rather than simply lifting the texts from their temporal moorings (third to fifth centuries), it would have been more helpful to have framed them within their sub-genre, acknowledging their different orientations and historicisations. Brakke does this, for example, when examining the "monastic literature, ranging from the collected sayings of desert monks (the *Apophthegmata Patrum*), to hagiography (the *Life of Antony*), to travel accounts (the *Historia Monachorum* and the *Lausaic History*), to discursive treatises on the ascetic life (John Cassian's *Conferences*)" – Brakke, 'Ethiopian Demons', 503–4. This affords the reader an appreciation of how widely the Ethiopian is invoked, however seldom, across the range of literature – e.g., of the hundreds of occurrences of demons in *Apophthegmata* there are less than ten citations of Ethiopian demons – John Cassian, *John Cassian: The Conferences*, trans. by Boniface Ramsay, 57 (New York: The Newman Press, 1997), 73. Then, this would then beg the question, why? Consequently, 'the otherness' of the Ethiopian as used in a rhetorical strategy of ethnopolitics could be proffered. This would then enable us to see clearly, as Brakke perspicaciously points out, that the demon was Ethiopianised among scores of other caricaturisations, and not the other way around – Brakke, 'Ethiopian Demons', 503.

⁶⁹ Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference*, 78.

⁷⁰ 'Connected histories' as a constitutive of 'critical conviviality' would have in principle offered the discussion a wider scope by contextualising the Egyptians' complicity with the imperialist gaze, since sometime before the Egyptian monastic fathers wrote, the nascent ecclesial structures of Ethiopian Christianity were co-opted by and brought into line with Egyptian Christianity – Rufinus, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. by T Mommsen, trans. by P. R. Amidon, 2 vols (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997 [1908]), 1:478–480. The problematising of blackness takes on a different veneer when understood through the impetus of this postcolonial lens.

⁷¹ Problematising whiteness as a referent control might help to see that a Manichean binary of whiteness and blackness does not do justice to the historical colour symbolism discourse. If we were to align whiteness with

a historically tenable ethnoreligious category is non-existent. However, as I demonstrate later in chapters 1 and 2, there are previous iterations of the germ of (modern conceptual) whiteness in inchoate form – a form of ‘proto-whiteness’ – that is a constitutive of the ancient discourse, *Adversus Judaeos*. Again, pigmentation as a site of contestation occupies an ambiguous, unstable and slippery space.⁷²

Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference turns to the construct of “models of virtue” (Ch. 5, pp. 108–121). Two early Christian texts are invoked: the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8:26-40 and the ‘Ethiopian Moses’ in *Apophthegmata Patrum*. I shall focus on the former, as it is the subject of this dissertation.

This section – “models of virtue” – briefly rehearses past works on the Ethiopian Eunuch from historical, literary, political, social-scientific, racial and economic critical studies, notwithstanding references to ethnographic, Patristic and text critical concerns. It does this to privilege a reading of the text: that ethnopolitical rhetorics allow one to see the Ethiopian as a model of virtue so that “even those associated with *Kandakē* could be converted to Christianity”.⁷³ Though this main point is significant, its intra-working is not without problems.

the northern territory of Scythia, for example – as blackness is aligned with the southern territory of Ethiopia – it would be seen that the binary correspondence does not serve comparatively as an ethnopolitical rhetorical tool. This is all the more suspect when we consider that the Scythians did not consider themselves as ‘white’ in the modern, western sense of the word. It was people from the barbarian northwest Europe – beyond Scythia – who were considered ‘pale-faced’, or to use our modern terminology, ‘white’. In fact, there are several descriptions of Ethiopians being called ‘swarthy’, thus rendering the Scythian-Ethiopian racial binary problematic, though as a geographical binary, valid. See the early 1st C.E., Publius Ovidius Naso, *Metamorphoses*, ed. Rudolf Merkel (Medford, MA: Cornhill Publishing Co., 1922), and Quintus of Smyrna, *The Trojan Epic: Posthomerica*, trans. Alan James (Baltimore; London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), to name two. For the geographical Ethiopian-Scythian binary see, Strabo 1.2.28.

⁷² Thinking this conceptual black-white construct through could assist further with distancing the fortuity of superimposing anachronistically a modern particularistic binary upon ancient realities – the very thing *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference* has set out not to do. Indeed, it has not succumbed, but my observation could contribute to clarifying further the discussion on the slipperiness of the term blackness – Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference*, 23.

⁷³ Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference*, 111.

The point of using the Ethiopian Eunuch to emphasise “the value of ascetic virtue within its community”,⁷⁴ appears opportunistic. In fact, the earlier analysis of ascetics from the fourth and fifth centuries appears to be influencing the conclusion that the Ethiopian eunuch in the text is silenced by Luke.⁷⁵ And ‘silenced’ is here commensurate with being neutered. The long shadows of the ascetics of late antiquity are in effect silencing the much earlier – the Hellenistic period – Ethiopian eunuch. Consequently, any recognition of his political and economic agency as subscribed to by the biblical text is overlooked and muted.

However, our engagement with the aforementioned Foucauldian power-knowledge structures within the Ethiopian eunuch discourse will demonstrate, especially in sections 4.2.1.2 and 4.2.1.6, that Luke decisively foregrounds the subjectivity of the Ethiopian eunuch. If in the narrative he is positioned as silent during Philip’s instructions, it would be because the narrator sees him as choosing to be listening. A discourse analysis of the narrative refracted by ‘critical conviviality’,⁷⁶ moreover, will further demonstrate that the agency of the Ethiopian eunuch is purposefully foregrounded as being in the ascendancy. He is silenced neither by Luke nor by Philip. If anything, there is a mutual, convivial listening characterised by agonistic dialecticism. Indeed, the power-knowledge optic could serve to clarify the point of the Ethiopian being a “model of virtue”.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference*, 121.

⁷⁵ Byron draws on two key words of the Isa 53.7-8 quote – ἄφωνος and ταπεινώσει – and confers them onto the Ethiopian eunuch to characterise him as a model of virtue (p. 114).

⁷⁶ ‘Critical conviviality’ is this dissertation’s newly developed adaptation of Paul Gilroy’s notion of conviviality, constituted by collectivist hospitality, ‘connected histories’, notions of ‘as if’ and the carnivalesque. See section 1.7.

⁷⁷ Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference*, 108–9. His being given a bible study by Philip in no way undermines his agency in the text. In fact, he instructs Philip to guide him and thereby, I would argue, maintains his agency in the narrative. The Ethiopian eunuch’s social class as a member of an elite stratum of an empire would have undoubtedly endeared him to Luke’s implied audience despite his ethnicity and sexual ambivalence. For Luke’s appeal to high society, see Philip Francis Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology*, SNTSMS 57 (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 183–7. I will address the role and function of power-knowledge in the

It is this sense of the ‘model of virtue’ that the ethnoreligious identity as Gentile is speculated. The brief argument relies on the juxtapositioning of two points – the first a fact and the second a suggestion.⁷⁸ One, ‘Ethiopians’ are not mentioned in the League of Nations (Acts 2:9-11); and two, the adverbial phrase εἰς μακράν in Acts 2:39 refers to Ethiopians. Since ‘Ethiopia’ is not referenced in the League Nations, Luke makes up for this by the “subtle reference”⁷⁹ to it in the phrase πᾶσιν τοῖς εἰς μακράν (to all who [are] far away) of Peter’s sermon.⁸⁰ However, even if μακράν was an allusion to the anticipated Ethiopian eunuch story, it does not necessarily signify ‘Gentiles’.⁸¹ To insist on this reading would require a more rigorous argument. If anything, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference* appear to be relaying on an inherited position in the guild on the ethnoreligious identity of the Ethiopian eunuch.

In sum, the rationale for ethnopolitical rhetorics could be helpful as part of a larger normative, postcolonial push for identifying the signifying force of ethnic/race thinking within the academy’s treatment of the Ethiopian eunuch text. However, the employment of it can be enhanced by the hermeneutical tool of ‘critical conviviality’ as characterised by ‘connected histories’,⁸² power-

narrative later in Part 2 of the dissertation where I exegete the text in light of its socio-rhetorical dynamics. Therefore, recognition of his social status need not be problematised by his ethnicity. On the contrary, while the intersectionality of ethnicity, class and sexuality might increase the tension of the eunuch’s ambivalence as a ‘deviant’ Ethiopian on the one hand and a prestigious elite on the next, it would have raised the bar of his being a “model of virtue”, but not in the sense of Byron’s meaning.

⁷⁸ Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference*, 111.

⁷⁹ Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference*, 111.

⁸⁰ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, every one of you, for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is made to you and to your children and to all who are afar off [τοῖς εἰς μακράν], to all whom [the] Lord our God will call to Himself” (Acts 2:38-39).

⁸¹ Byron asserts that “Luke is the only NT author who uses the term μακράν”. As the sentence stands this is incorrect since while μακράν is used in Acts 2:39; 17:27 and 22:21, it is also used in Matt. 8:30; Mark 12:34; Luke 7:6; 15:20; John 21:8; and Eph. 2:13, 17. This is notwithstanding that Acts 22:21 has the alignment ἔθνη μακράν – the far away Gentiles – which Byron appears to have missed.

⁸² The method of ‘connected histories’ augments the process of rehistoricisation in that it binds the reader to

knowledge analysis,⁸³ and conjunctural contextuality,⁸⁴ which, I contend later, render the Ethiopian eunuch's agency as dynamic and efficacious.⁸⁵ Furthermore, is the verdict of a Gentile identity due to the fact that the Ethiopia is too far (μακράν)? Then is his blackness too remote to be considered Jewish?

Indeed, to use Cain Felder's words, "the darker races outside the Roman orbit . . . [are] circumstantially marginalised by New Testament authors".⁸⁶ This might be what the epigraph of this chapter on inherited tradition infers. In it, Bultmann posits that it is natural to interpret traditionally within the orbit of one's culture. However, I would add 'especially if one's orbit is thought to be the universal, teleological fulfilment of intellectual and cultural supremacy'. Could interpretations of Acts 8:26-40 serve, then, as a case study favourable for investigating what kind of 'philosophy' influences the kind of conceptuality that appears to repress the agency of the Ethiopian eunuch?

consider seriously on their own merit, other histories not of the mainstream fold. See section 1.7.1.2.

⁸³ See section 4.2.1.2.

⁸⁴ For a definition of the conjuncture see, Stuart Hall, 'Assembling the 1980s: The Deluge -- and After', in *Shades of Black: Assembling Black Arts in 1980s Britain*, ed. by David A. Bailey, Ian Baucom, and Sonia Boyce (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2005), 4.

⁸⁵ If anything, the "model of virtue" argument might be culpable of being reductionist, colonising the agency by a retroactive reading of fourth and fifth century constructed virtues. Anachronistically, he could be deemed silent within and by Luke's discourse. This is not the problem of ethno-political rhetorics itself, but its failure to be *articulated*. If it were articulated with cultural lens, for example, it might render it as a contested, shifting, and conjunctural site of intersectionality without robbing the Ethiopian eunuch's subjectivity of his dynamic agency.

⁸⁶ Cain Hope Felder, 'Racial Ambiguities in the Biblical Narratives', in *The Church and Racism*, eds. Gregory Baum and John Coleman, Concilium, 151 (New York: Seabury Press, 1992), 22. This is reminiscent of Ellison's 1952 *Invisible Man* who despite his encounter with a white man is simply not seen, not because of the failure of the man's visual faculty of perception, but because of his ideological blindness where he cannot register the presence of a black person in the space that he as a white person has claims to. See Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (London: Penguin Books, 2001).

Craig Keener: Ethnoreligious Identity – A Gentile?

Craig Keener's *Acts* squarely asserts that the Ethiopian eunuch was a Gentile.⁸⁷ However, when referring to the Ethiopian's ethnicity, this assertion seems to be justified by an obfuscatory attempt to attenuate the relations between Judaism and Ethiopians. There are a few examples. For instance, when commenting on the eschatological return of the Jews from the area of Cush in Zeph. 3:10, there is acknowledgement that it accommodates diasporic Jews, but the commentary insists that Gentile converts would have conceivably been included. This has the subtle effect of obfuscating a *bona fide*, if ever there is one, fully-fledged Jewish heritage.⁸⁸ Since converted Gentiles were present, there could not be any pre-existing Jews in Ethiopia.

A second example of the same approach is made with respect to the Egyptian and Ethiopian references in Pss. 68:31 [67:32 LXX]; 87:4 [86:4]) as signifiers of non-Jews.⁸⁹ The fourth and fifth century Eusebius and Augustine are uncritically invoked to corroborate this reading. However, as noted in chapter two, their reading is undergirded by an *Adversus Judaeos* trope that is not prevalent in the first century. In effect, the commentary's instantiations of both the Psalms and the Patristic references are deployed strategically in the argument to obfuscate any possible 'original' Jewish presence in Ethiopia.

A third example is the religious backdrop of Ethiopia. There is the acknowledgement that Meroë, the capital of the kingdom, was known for its

⁸⁷ Keener, *Acts*, 2:1537.

⁸⁸ In the phrase, "although the prophets may have been thinking especially of Diaspora Jews, on first-century presuppositions this gathering would have to include Gentile converts who had become Diaspora Jews" Keener, *Acts*, 2:1538–9, neither the preeminence of the Hebrew reading of the text nor possible converted diasporic Jews are given due regard. Either assertions would account for fully-fledged Jews. However, foregrounding the presence of converted Gentiles has the obfuscating effect of suggesting that they were all from Ethiopia, and therefore not *bona fide* fully-fledged Jews.

⁸⁹ Keener, *Acts*, 2:1539.

monotheism in the worship of Amun. However, the commentary privileges a polytheistic reading, given this reality too.⁹⁰ This pairing of two possible religious practices is meant to pre-empt any fully-fledged Jewish identity in Ethiopia. At most, the orientalist reading of the piety of the Ethiopians as substantiated by the earlier Homer and Diodorus Siculus, in addition to the insurmountable distance between Ethiopia and Jerusalem, account for his visit – a possible pilgrimage⁹¹ – to Jerusalem as religiously intentional, nothing more. Even in allowing for the 500 years (BCE) long-standing presence of Jews in Elephantine,⁹² the adjoining Ethiopian territory is played down. The Ethiopian eunuch cannot be a Jew because he is from Ethiopia.

It is difficult to ascertain whether Keener's commentary's insistence on a Gentile ethnoreligious identity is racialised as prohibitive on African grounds. There does seem to be a supplementary effort to demonstrate the notion that as a castrated eunuch forbidden from worshipping in Jerusalem's temple the Ethiopian could not be a fully-fledged Jew.⁹³ But this latter argument does not consider the 'connected histories' of eunuchic modalities in adjoining Afroasiatic⁹⁴ civilisations and cultures. Except, that it privileges a Graeco-Roman facing comparison, which

⁹⁰ Keener, *Acts*, 2:1545, 1565.

⁹¹ Keener, *Acts*, 2:1539. The assertion of a possible pilgrimage is a moot point of the commentary.

⁹² Keener, *Acts*, 2:1566. At the most, the commentary allows for a possible trading contact between the Ethiopia and Alexandria as a possible site for the Ethiopian eunuch to make meaningful contact with the Jews there.

⁹³ Keener, *Acts*, 2:1566–71. The usual prohibitive references are made in line with the traditional view of the Ethiopian eunuch being castrated: Deut. 23:1; ambiguity between castrated Jews and 'official' in OT references to the eunuch; the contemporaneous extrabiblical reference of Caesar's *Civil Wars* 3:108 about a eunuch and the royal household; Luke's preference for the synecdoche 'eunuch' (Acts 8:27, 34, 36, 38, 39) to mean putatively a castrated eunuch as opposed to an 'official'; and the practice of eunuchs being the custodians of the harems of royal palaces. What is problematic is the consistent references to Graeco-Roman sources as the normative for understanding an African eunuch.

⁹⁴ The term, 'Afroasiatic', is politically adopted to re-position the epistemic centre of what is generally referred to in biblical studies as Palestine and the Ancient Near East (ANE), and today as the 'Middle East'. It is also a reference to its people inclusive of those in the diaspora. This point is argued for in section 1.3.3. However, for a development of this view see, Cain Hope Felder, 'Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation', *DBI*, 14.

for reasons that I argue later in section 4.3.1.3, is not the best reference. Moreover, the argument does not study in a properly contextualised manner the Patristic commentaries on the ethnoreligious identity of the Ethiopian eunuch (as I do in chapter 2). Instead, there is an anachronistic homogenising of all things ‘eunuch’ across several centuries and of different geopolitical regions, indiscriminately imposed upon the Ethiopian eunuch.

This obfuscation along a singular, linear Graeco-Roman progression does not sufficiently account for ambiguity or alternative narratives. Linearity cannot work since the multiple textures of our pericope and intersectionality of the Ethiopian eunuch’s subjectivity have to be heard through interdisciplinary tools, which move back and forth across time and space to make contact with him as an emergent agent of pilgrimage, conversion and mission. In sum, neither Byron’s nor Keener’s texts adequately accounts for the ethnoreligious identity of the Ethiopian eunuch.

Purpose Statement

In light of the foregoing, the purpose of this dissertation is to contend that the text, body and agency of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8.26-40), notwithstanding his complex sexual and political subjectivity, served and continue to serve to disrupt the ethnoreligious sensibilities of successive readerships of Acts. For these imperial readerships, he, within a short period of time, cannot be conceptualised as a fully-fledged Jew. Of interest here is what lay beneath this structural denial. This denial is apparent in the early centuries of Christianity and persists to the present time. However, once the data is processed, other epistemological conjunctures will be theorised for a plausible diasporic ‘Jewish’ conception through the Acts 8:26-40 literary signatures of ‘diasporic pilgrimage’ and ‘the politics of representation’. Consequently, the literary location of the Ethiopian eunuch’s story in Acts will be seen to inform his socio-political and

theological meaning for Acts as a whole and help provide a key to understanding the literary development of missions in Acts.

Significance

The significance of this study will be seen in how this literary figure distanced by two millennia of historical readings has been conceptually and effectively colonised for the most part, rendering him marginalised and impotent. The legacy of a hegemonic ‘philosophy’ has persisted, on the main, through the refraction of the conceptuality of biblical exegetes. As such, this dissertation will make a number of significant contributions to biblical studies scholarship: one, in its construction of a new hermeneutic, ‘critical conviviality’; two, in its alignment of whiteness with the ancient *Adversus Judaeos* tradition in its incipient form; three, in its demonstration of the historical, decisive shift of the ethnoreligious identity of the Ethiopian eunuch from a fully-fledged Jew to a Graeco-Roman Gentile ‘ideal type’; four, in its identification of two conceptual tropes – pilgrimage and representation – as generated by Acts 8:26–40, which support plausible, historical reasons for the Ethiopian eunuch to be envisaged as a black African Jew; and, finally five, in its substantiation of the way the Ethiopian eunuch as a fully-fledged Jew completes the paradigmatic formula of Acts 1:8, where he represents the diasporic Jews – following Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria – before pre-figuring the ‘end of the earth’.

Therefore, any insidious, imperial imagination that subjugates the reading of the Ethiopian eunuch’s agency to essentialist categories, and which, in turn, renders him subaltern in the Spivakian sense of the word, will be exposed.⁹⁵ The

⁹⁵ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’, in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Chicago, Ill: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 294. For a historical critique of subalternity see also John Beverley, *Subalternity and Representation: Arguments in Cultural Theory* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999). Subalternity is positioned as a sub-species of postcolonial studies pioneered by the classic monograph of Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999). Spivak is in sympathy with the

Ethiopian eunuch will ‘speak’. His multiple voices will be heard in his own body, to tell his own story beyond rigid borders set by the dominant discourse’s fixated gaze. Thus, while over the years he has been immobilised by their summary stories about him or against him, in this dissertation he is eventually liberated.

The Mode of Enquiry: Assembly

The challenge of this interdisciplinary dissertation is to employ a mode of enquiry, a mode of selection – in contradistinction to methodology – that would not only enable the canvassing of the reception history of the Ethiopian eunuch but present its postcolonial efficacy as a liberatory hermeneutic, optimal for the analysis of conceptualities. This will help us to justify the selection of the multiple sites for investigation whether among the Church Fathers or the text of Acts. The mode of enquiry is ‘assembly’, which is a specific, strategic means of selecting particular, conjunctural texts and periods for examination. It is therefore useful to rationalise its utility and the way it will advance the scheme of this dissertation. Assembly, if I may adjust Paul Taylor’s definition in parenthesis before explaining it, aspires

To identify, gather together, and explore the linked contextual [though sometimes disconnected, conjunctural] factors in virtue of which we might productively and provisionally comprehend various phenomena [along a particular or series of trajectories].⁹⁶

When seeking to critique the great expanse of work done by the Black Arts Movement (BAM) in Britain during the 1980s, Stuart Hall first invoked the

cause of subalternity. See Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty, *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1988). For a critique of subalternity see Vivek Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (London: Verso Books, 2013). For a review of this book and its subsequent and lively discussion with Dipesh Chakrabarty, see John Harriss, ‘Book Review: Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital by Vivek Chibber’, *Journal of Agrarian Change* 14 (2014): 470–475.

⁹⁶ Paul C. Taylor, *Black Is Beautiful: A Philosophy of Black Aesthetics* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), 3, (parentheses mine).

method of assembling as a means of collating its peaks and troughs, its ebbs and flows to capture this work of BAM “as an object of critical knowledge”.⁹⁷ For Hall, the method “does not aspire to a definitive interpretation of the period”. It is not conclusive, final nor totalising. Instead, it ‘maps’ the work of the movement “as part of a wider cultural/political moment, tracking some of the impulses that went into its making and suggesting some interconnections between them.” He continues,

I ‘assemble’ these elements, not as a unity, but in all their contradictory dispersion. In adopting this genealogical approach, the artwork itself appears, not in its fullness as an aesthetic object, but as a constitutive element in the fabric of the wider world of ideas, movements, and events, while at the same time offering us a privileged vantage point on that world.⁹⁸

For Hall, the dispersion of events and the elements of the 1980s could not be coherently unified. Like the period of the Church Fathers, for example, they are constitutively contradictory, given their different registers of the historical, cultural and political, their competing contexts of inheritance, loss and legacy, not to mention the intersecting and segregating vectors of racism, sexism, homophobia, and the like – all of which are shrouded in the complex vortex of postcolonialism. This renders the method of assembling unwieldy, fractious and incomplete. But this is equally its strength because the process focusses the analysis on the currents, forces and impact of the period without losing sight of the material.

Influenced by Antonio Gramsci, Hall refers to the 1980s as a conjuncture, “a fusion of contradictory forces that nevertheless cohere enough to constitute a

⁹⁷ Stuart Hall, ‘Assembling the 1980s’, 1.

⁹⁸ Stuart Hall, ‘Assembling the 1980s’, 1.

definite configuration”.⁹⁹ Indeed, “the forces operative in a conjuncture have no single origin, time scale, or determination”.¹⁰⁰ We do not know when they start or when they end. Neither are they necessarily causal in their relationships. Therefore, the forces constitutive of the conjuncture are not to be measured temporally, but “by their articulation”, by which Hall means their ‘coupling’ with a particular, independent event, “a particular moment”.¹⁰¹ In this way, in our quest for an appropriate hermeneutic to interrogate conceptual readings of the Ethiopian eunuch (whether they be Patristic texts or socioreligious tropes in Acts), assembly, as a mode of enquiry, will seek to track their ‘conjunctural shifts’ in light of the postcolonial impulses of whiteness and ‘critical conviviality’ and examine them for their emancipatory worth.

Based on the foregoing argument, I am seeking to assemble a hermeneutic out of the problem spaces (i.e., epistemological spaces of ruptures, breaks and discontinuities), historical junctures, conjunctural shifts and recurring arguments and debates that we find throughout the reception history of the Ethiopian eunuch. While there are different levels at which we can raise the question, different ways to address the question – to cash out the question – the interest of assembly as a mode of enquiry is to press the political register of the research question for its ethnoreligious and imaginary import.

⁹⁹ Stuart Hall, ‘Assembling the 1980s’, 4. Hall also invokes Althusser to refer to a conjuncture as “a condensation of dissimilar currents...the ruptural fusion of an accumulation of contradictions” (p. 4.).

¹⁰⁰ Stuart Hall, ‘Assembling the 1980s’, 4.

¹⁰¹ James Procter, *Stuart Hall* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004), 54. Hall’s uses the term, articulation, in the sense of, to use his words, “an ‘articulated’ lorry (truck): a lorry where the front (cab) and back (trailer) can, but need not necessarily, be connected to one another. The two parts are connected to each other, but through a specific linkage, that can be broken. An articulation is thus the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions” – Lawrence Grossberg, ‘On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall’, in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. by Kuan-Hsing Chen and David Morley (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), 141.

Methodology

This research is a dissertation of two halves: deconstruction and reconstruction. Part 1 deals mainly with the task of deconstruction and consists of chapters 1 and 2. Here whiteness is identified as the first postcolonial diagnostic tool, primarily instrumental for identifying epistemologically racialised currents in different readings (or the Cartesian gaze) of the Ethiopian eunuch. Part 2 deals mainly with the task of reconstruction and consists of chapters 3 and 4. Here a new and nuanced form of the postcolonial trope of conviviality, what I call, 'critical conviviality', will be introduced to reconstruct a plausible reading of Acts 8:26-40, thereby enabling a re-imaging and re-imagining of a black African (Afroasiatic) Jew. It is a countervailing tool that serves to reconstitute the academy's dominant gaze of whiteness. Both theoretical tools are drawn from cultural studies at the behest of postcolonial theory, itself an emancipatory project.

The point of adopting the twin analytical tools is not to prove the historicity of the Ethiopian eunuch, even his ethnoreligious identity. This would be a futile exercise. It is to provide a theoretical framework to critique the dominant white, Eurocentric interpretative tradition and to offer a concept for reenvisioning the agency and identity of the Ethiopian eunuch in relation with others – a reenvisioned depiction, which is also built on serious consideration of what is historical plausible. It is to sensitise the reader to the pernicious ways certain conceptualities are shut down over the centuries and with them certain reading communities. The power of cultural studies, whence these interdisciplinary tools are derived, is in its ability to track how meaning is reproduced, resisted and transformed when bound up through systems of power and control whether by means of social formation or the conjuncture of social, political and economic discourse. It is not a prescriptive enterprise that seeks to survey, invoke and apply

models of social science to determine the discursive production of texts on the Ethiopian eunuch.

In other words, historical and literary data are invoked in this dissertation – whether they add value to the plausibility of the Jewish ethnoreligious agency of the Ethiopian eunuch – to demonstrate the deleterious effects that the imperial gaze of the academy might have upon otherwise dynamic imaginations. In which case, rehistoricisation is needed, but in the Gadamerian sense of *Wirkungsgeschichte*, where contrary to historical objectivism, one deconstructs the participation of successive readerships in their production of meaning for the formation and application of the (hegemonic) discourse.¹⁰² The materiality constitutive of the process is avowed in the rehistoricisation that it demands. This interdisciplinary and liberatory strategy of reading literature or historical claims through cultural lens without compartmentalising the study into a historical, literary or cultural one is critical to construing the aims of the dissertation. It is an interdisciplinary effort to delve behind the bureaucracy of exegetical diligence to uncover motivations and interests.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975). In establishing grounds for *Wirkungsgeschichte* (effective history or the history of experiential effects) Gadamer impugns the notion of historical objectivism, which states that history can only be attested through positivistic, scientific means of detached observation, empirical measurement and disinterested formulations, yielding one factual account. He avers, “historical objectivism resembles statistics, which are such excellent means of propaganda because they let the “facts” speak and hence simulate an objectivity that in reality depends on the legitimacy of the questions asked”, (p. 300). In other words, facts are wholly contingent on the questions raised and the perspective employed.

¹⁰³ It is a bureaucracy manifested in terms of Eurocentric customisation, domestication or, to borrow a term from the health sciences, clinicalisation. W. R. Cowling, ‘Healing as Appreciating Wholeness’, *Advances in Nursing Science* 22.3 (2000): 16–32, is the first to coin the phrase, “clinicalisation of human experience,” to describe an approach to patient care that denies the personal expression of certain facets of human life while not “fully accounting for the essence and wholeness of experience” (p.16). I intend to adopt and literarily adapt the phrase to refer to a type of Eurocentric domestication, customisation and colonisation of texts that stifle its often-multidimensional facets and thereby deny a fuller representation/affordance of the characters or characterisations in the name of facts and or history. A fuller representation of a character is not only manifest in terms of materiality – physicality, rhetoric and production – but the social and metaphysical dimensions of life.

Though, as alluded to earlier, conventional PhDs may begin with a standard ‘literature review’, major texts on the Ethiopian eunuch appear to be associated with issues of methodology and can uncannily be assembled in the main against a genealogical trace of his reception history. Therefore, the ‘literature review’ of the pertinent texts, notwithstanding the previous texts of Byron and Keener, will be best done at the appropriate conjunctures in chapters 1 and 2. This strategy is in keeping with the spirit of unsettling normative conventions and will accommodate the few scholarly researches done on the Ethiopian eunuch accordingly. A brief introduction to the twin tropes of whiteness and ‘critical conviviality’ is helpful by way of denoting the strategic means of analysis. However, they will be more fully nuanced and critically developed in the next chapter to show how they are hermeneutically deployed.

Critical Whiteness

Whiteness is identified as the first postcolonial trope, instrumental for identifying epistemologically racialised currents in different readings (or the Cartesian gaze) of the Ethiopian eunuch. It is part of a deconstruction exercise to identify the epistemological blind spots inherent in a Cartesian gaze.¹⁰⁴

Whiteness as a critical theory conceptualises a racialised, ideological paradigm that measures ethnicity, sexuality, culture, religion, and spirituality against a white masculine norm. Through its gaze it structures conceptuality to transmute a subject (of ‘an Other’) into an object to conform to its Eurocentric sensibility. Although it can be conceptualised as commodity in Cheryl Harris’s notion of property,¹⁰⁵ it is more a way of Cartesian thinking that privileges conformity to

¹⁰⁴ With respect to a deconstruction of Cartesian anthropology, see Mills, *Blackness Visible*, 7–11. The Cartesian gaze is explored in some detail in section 1.3.2.

¹⁰⁵ Cheryl I. Harris, ‘Whiteness as Property’, *Harvard Law Review* 106.8 (1993): 1707–1791. I am not excluding Harris’s notion of equating whiteness with property privileges, which, when obtained, brings incomparable access to the courts, police, legislatures and governors. It will be seen in Chapter 2 how through Eusebius’s politics of interpretation his new ethnoreligious agency indeed becomes the property of

all things Eurocentric, epitomised in white skin, whether aesthetically or intellectually. This, I argue, is the deeply entrenched gaze.

W.E.B. Du Bois was probably the first scholar to articulate whiteness as an export of colonialism and imperialism as early as 1910 where he highlighted the way white supremacy perceives race superiority, inferiority and ‘Otherness’ in Europe and USA. Du Bois refers to this export as a religion: “wave on wave, each with increasing virulence, is dashing this new religion of whiteness on the shores of our time”.¹⁰⁶ It is a religion, because, “a nation’s religion is its life” and this white religion is “white Christianity”.¹⁰⁷ It is the organising principle that sustains and maintains hierarchies of histories.

This alignment of whiteness with Christianity should not be lost on the influence of whiteness on biblical studies, even if in epistemological circles. As aforementioned, the philosophical gaze of whiteness shrouded in Cartesian respectability serves as the default, universalised reading and consequently obfuscates any ‘other’ potential reading and meaning of the text. It is prohibitive. But there is a materiality to the gaze of whiteness. One, it is manufactured and reproduced in the biblical studies guild with impunity;¹⁰⁸ and, two, it racialises bodies. Raced bodies are black bodies, not white bodies. White bodies are invisible and non-raced because as the norm they do not need to enunciate themselves. Yet white bodies are omnipresent as they represent humanity, occupying its central, universalising narrative while assuming that everyone

proto-whiteness with property rights to being the first Graeco-Gentile Christian convert.

¹⁰⁶ W. E. B. Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil* (South Africa: Translate House Classics, 2014 [1910]), 16.

¹⁰⁷ Du Bois, *Darkwater*, 18.

¹⁰⁸ Denise Kimber Buell, “Anachronistic Whiteness and the Ethics of Interpretation,” in *Ethnicity, Race, Religion: Identities and Ideologies in Early Jewish and Christian Texts, and in Modern Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Katherine M. Hockey and David G. Horrell (London; New York: T.& T. Clark, 2018), 149–167.

should identify with it. This racelessness sublimates the ethnic other in its gaze into either extinction or co-optation. It is extinction, if the gaze is colour-blind; co-optation if the gaze is homogenising. At best, the raced body becomes an honorary white; at worse, it becomes, in Du Bois's words, a '*tertium quid*' – the third other, not quite human.¹⁰⁹ Like Toni Morrison's fishbowl, which contains both fish and water, the invisibility of whiteness – the fishbowl – provides the contextual norm for meaning-making.¹¹⁰

The Weberian 'ideal type',¹¹¹ whiteness as a European pure type, is normative. It is the benchmark against which all other ethnic, cultural and religious identities are measured and is seen as their destiny. Since it is a social construct, it ought not be seen as an attempt to reify race as concept, which, in itself, is what I am trying to question. In this light, whiteness is unable to make sense of its 'self' with respect to the other and to recognise its agency as a beneficiary of a racial hierarchy that is complicit with injustice.

However, as Audrey Thompson suggests, whiteness is not the same as Eurocentrism. Eurocentrism, which tends towards values and standards,

¹⁰⁹ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. Brent Hayes Edwards (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007 [1903]), 111–12.

¹¹⁰ Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 17. The invisibility of whiteness means that we focus on the fish and the water, not the glass fishbowl (whiteness) itself.

¹¹¹ The notion of 'ideal type' is drawn from Max Weber's concept of ideal type. It is essentially the ultimate representation of the best form possible. For a technical explanation of the Weberian 'ideal type', see Max Weber, *Methodology of Social Sciences*, trans. by Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch (New York: Free Press, 1949), 90. For the manner in which Weber builds the notion of ideal type to mean the pure type of the European westerner, see Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2012), especially chapter 4, 'The Religious Foundations of Worldly Asceticism', 54–101. For an contextual explanation of Weber's ideal types, see Don Martindale, 'Sociological Theory and the Ideal Type', in *Symposium on Sociological Theory*, ed. by Llewellyn Gross (New York: Harper And Row, 1959), 57–91. For an alternative analysis of types, see John C. McKinney, *Constructive Typology and Social Theory* (New York: Meredith Publishing Company, 1966). Here he argues for types being artificially constructed. For an even better deconstruction of how 'ideal types' are displayed, real and imagined, see Charles W. Mills, "Ideal Theory" as Ideology', *Hypatia* 20.3 (2005): 165–83. Therefore, in light of the ideological nature of the Weberian ideal type, the notion of ideal type will be retained.

monopolises ‘the Other’, whether by valorising itself above ‘the Other’ and thereby denigrating ‘the Other’, or by ignoring ‘the Other’ through blind spots. Pluralism, for example, can dethrone Eurocentrism, setting all cultures and races as equal, thereby producing a level playing field. Whiteness, however, cannot be resolved by pluralism, since it relies politically on the hermetic segregation of white and black, in that whiteness is valorised as a symbol of purity and originality against the opposite primitivism of blackness or a hybrid of autochthonous blackness. This cultural hierarchism cannot be overcome by pluralism.¹¹² This is of greater significance, since in addition to being a cultural trope it is, moreover, a political one.

‘Critical Conviviality’

‘Critical conviviality’ is the second trope identified to help revive the agency of the Ethiopian eunuch and to reconstruct his subjectivity. It is *developed* from Paul Gilroy’s depiction of cosmopolitan British society:

Conviviality is a social pattern in which different metropolitan groups dwell in close proximity but where their racial, linguistic and religious particularities do not ... add up to discontinuities of experience or insuperable problems of communication.¹¹³

Gilroy’s conviviality describes the nature of relations where peoples come together so naturally that “the processes of cohabitation and interaction ... have made multi-culture an ordinary feature of social life,”¹¹⁴ even within the uneven milieu of

¹¹² Audrey Thompson, ‘Summary of Whiteness Theory’, 2001 <<http://www.pauahtun.org/Whiteness-Summary-1.html>>. See also: http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/resources/whiteness/summary_of_whiteness_theory.pdf. For further discussion on the relationship between whiteness and pluralism, see Audrey Thompson, ‘Colortalk: Whiteness and Off White’, *Educational Studies*, 30 (1999): 152.

¹¹³ Paul Gilroy, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (London: Routledge, 2004), 27.

¹¹⁴ Gilroy, *After Empire*, ix. Gilroy distinguishes between multiculturalism and multiculture. Multiculturalism is characterised by a world of cultural hierarchy – it is not enough to be human to be equal. Multiculture is defined by convivial interactions, where people cohabit and relate to one another ordinarily, negotiating their differences in real time.

existential contradictions and opposition. This has been made possible by cultural tolerance, openness, and anti-racist interventions, which make “a nonsense of closed, fixed, and reified identity”.¹¹⁵ This kind of conviviality necessitates social contact at different levels, whether formal or informal. And although there might be intercultural challenges, natural organic relations persist and relationships are forged, whether incidental or lasting.

Gilroy’s conviviality is the inspiration for my new hermeneutic termed, ‘critical conviviality’. Since I develop it theoretically as a hermeneutical lens in the next chapter (1.7), it suffices here to summarise it in terms of a horizontal (temporal) and vertical (spatial-liminal) conviviality. It is a conceptual lens, which offers ways of seeing collectivist Afroasiatic societies in late antiquity in terms of their free organic human movement, relations and hospitality, but to see them from liminal perspectives of hybridity. An example of its application to our Ethiopian eunuch story, as will be suggested later in chapter 3, is that Luke himself most likely carried a cosmopolitan sensibility. This liminality of Luke as cosmopolitan could well be the source of his optics, implying that it informed the politics of his socio-religious identity and impressed them optically upon the contours of his plot in Acts, not least his invocation of the Ethiopian eunuch character. Hence, Acts is people-centredness. In which case, many of the stories he invokes would themselves play out convivially on the horizontal plane of relations. ‘Critical conviviality’, then, can conceptually be taken to be both a temporal and spatial (or liminal) site where cosmopolitan activity can be habituated.

Given that Gilroy’s conviviality disrupts the hegemonic metanarrative of modernity as the story of the global North, in that it has undermined efforts to control and limit cross-cultural contact, ‘critical conviviality’ as a postcolonial,

¹¹⁵ Gilroy, *After Empire*, xi.

hermeneutical trope will serve, for the purposes of this dissertation, to subvert the depositories of whiteness and its antecedents. In its critique of the Ethiopian eunuch, it will subvert whiteness as an epistemic site of oppression and privilege as manifested intersectionally in the Cartesian gaze of gender, sexuality, race, class and Euromodernity. In other words, when applying the trope of ‘critical conviviality’ as an analytical tool, implicit within the critique is the subversion of these sites as themselves normative, universal epistemes.

Limitations

I acknowledge that the lines of enquiry have yielded a particular writing style that tends towards being dense. This is specifically due to the specialised and complex language of the multi-disciplinary discourses with which I am engaging. While this has the benefit of precision, its criticality might render its reading ponderous as it attempts to grasp and clarify new coalitions of ideas and meanings.

On another note, I am not interested in pinpointing the precise ethnoreligious agency of the eunuch *per se*. Such a pursuit as alluded to before would require historical excavations the evidence for which might not be substantive enough. Therefore, the dissertation will not address the Axumite inscriptions and Ge’ez translations of Acts 8, nor the important text of the *Kebra Nagast*, as appealing as these might be.¹¹⁶ Put another way, I am not as concerned with the ‘what’ of the question, as with the ‘why’. (Although questions of the ‘what’ in terms of material contingencies and conjunctural possibilities are inevitably considered, but only to foreground the ‘why’.)

¹¹⁶ Gay L. Byron, ‘Ancient Ethiopia and the New Testament: Ethnic (Con)Texts and Racialized (Sub)Texts’, in *They Were All Together in One Place? Toward Minority Biblical Criticism*, ed. by Randall C. Bailey, Tat-Siong Benny Liew, and Fernando F. Segovia, SemeiaSt 57 (Atlanta: SBL, 2009), 176.

Why not a Jew?

The question of ‘why’, is a political question. It is the politics of why certain ethnoreligious identities are ascribed to and denied the Ethiopian eunuch. Hence, phrasing the question in the negative allows one to interrogate conceptualities of different readerships, which trade on assuming a particular gaze. As a result, during the course of this dissertation, the research question will expose shades of a similar gaze deployed by a number of key readerships of the Ethiopian eunuch story and reveal how this gaze afflicted by blind spots has served to constrict and restrain his agency, even for different or comparable reasons.

For a plausible view of his ethnoreligious agency, one would have to read against the text, since the view of a historically local perspective is not present nor evident. What we have in the narrative is Luke’s perspective as instrumentalised by the missionary character of Philip. We do not have any local (historical) perspectives like that of the Samaritans in the previous pericope of Simon Magus (Acts 8:4-25). We only have Luke’s imaginary multicultural audience. So as not to be overly preoccupied with the sympathies of the apostolic narrative, a reading against the text allows not only for a Graeco-Roman perspective but a nonrabbinic, Afroasiatic one. This reading strategy in turn will unveil a Eurocentric bias in scholarship of wishing to tie Act’s mission to the Gentiles to the legacy of Graeco-Roman culture. Reading against the text then is vital for a credible construal of the agency of the Ethiopian eunuch even if attenuated by the redacted version of Luke.

How to Name Him?

In light of the foregoing, there is the abiding question as to how to refer to the Ethiopian eunuch in shorthand. Do I refer to him as ‘Ethiopian’, ‘eunuch’ or ‘Ethiopian eunuch’? Luke’s pericope prefers the synecdoche, eunuch. Of the five times it is cited, ‘eunuch’ stands alone four times, which might point to what a

commentator of this pericope should do: retain and maintain the synecdoche. However, the decision should hinge on the emancipatory aim behind the research question, ‘why cannot the Ethiopian eunuch be a Jew?’ I am interested in the politics of his ethnoreligious identity and agency – how this is construed, practiced, applied. In other words, what ethnoreligious reading of the Ethiopian eunuch pre-empts him from being imaged as a Jew and why? This question exposes a gaze, I suggest, which totalises the subjectivity of the Ethiopian eunuch, because, as will be seen in this dissertation, it has been the dominant, imperialist gaze for some eighteen hundred years, concluding that he cannot be a Jew. We will demonstrate that it is whiteness, its antecedents and its anticipation as a dominant episteme of the modern gaze that requires our gaze to be re-calibrated in order to appreciate the substantive extent of the man before us.

Whiteness is negated through the refraction of blackness. Hence, it is important to see the eunuch as a black, elite African. Although Luke’s use of eunuch as a synecdoche projects eunuch as a title, it is precisely the literary use of this synecdoche that suggests that Luke is prioritising the functional role of the double-barrelled title not necessarily his sexuality. Therefore, the research question provides an abiding interrogation of the detractor’s gaze, as it disrupts its dominant, fixating yet obfuscating gaze.

Given this focus, it might prove instructive to keep before my readers the full efficacy of the ‘blackness’ of the Ethiopian eunuch. He is a black African eunuch, which constitutes the efficacy of his ethnoreligious agency in Luke’s text.¹¹⁷ His imposing figure as a black African eunuch conjures up different meanings in the

¹¹⁷ While the foregrounding of his blackness might not have been as important for Luke’s strategy, in that he foregrounds the literary use of the shorthand ‘eunuch’ to give prominence to his eminent status – a portrait that is ostensibly more important to Luke for reasons I will explain in chapter 4 – the persistent erasure of his ethnoreligious agency through redundancy, eroticism, romanticism and exoticism in different readings renders my emancipatory project to focus on the politics of his identity and agency.

imagination of modern readers. This has something to do with ways in which Africans have been historically treated and constructed. His figure could then serve as a figure of 'haunting', in the way that Avital Ronell talks about haunting:

What is it that holds sway over us like an unconditional prescription? What commands us to obey some hidden yet imperative force that may or may not make sense, or that may be discoverable outside of us, inside, beyond our grasp, ahead of us or in the past? The distance between us and that which commands our moves – or their opposite, our immobility – approaches us: it is a distance that closes in on you at times, it announces a proximity closer than any intimacy or familiarity you have ever known. At times it speaks to you, guiding you without manifesting itself as an identifiable or subjectivable someone.¹¹⁸

This figure of haunting is inculcated through different happenings and socialisations, informing our unconscious and eliciting states of anxiety, cultural dissonance, sexual desires, emotional paralysis, hope, fear. It unwittingly affects perceptions, conceptions and epistemologies. In this way, blackness, albeit, a kind produced by whiteness,¹¹⁹ is figured as haunting. Hence, the insistence of using the double-barrelled name, 'Ethiopian eunuch', is meant to foreground his blackness. It is the literary strategy of the political gesture of haunting. This is a haunting where the figure of blackness, though epitomised by the Ethiopian eunuch's pigmentation, draws on invocations of socio-political meanings.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Avital Ronell, *Dictations: On Haunted Writing* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), xvi–xvii.

¹¹⁹ There are several texts that processes the notion that popular blackness, which has become the norm, is a production of whiteness. See Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (New York; Berkeley: Pluto Press, 2008), chap. 2; Harryette Mullen, 'Optic White: Blackness and the Production of Whiteness', *Diacritics* 24.2/3 (1994): 71–89; Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015); Dennis Carlson, 'Narrating the Multicultural Nation: Rosa Parks and the White Mythology of the Civil Rights Movement', in *Off White: Readings on Power, Privilege, and Resistance*, ed. by Michelle Fine and others, 2nd ed. (London; New York: Routledge, 2012), 302–14; Arthur Flannigan, 'Alphonse de Lamartine's Toussaint Louverture and the Staging of White Masculinity', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 35.2 (2007): 333–51; and Eileen Muller Myrdahl, *Orientalist Knowledge at the European Periphery: Norwegian Racial Projects, 1970–2005* (Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest, UMI Dissertation Publishing, 2011).

¹²⁰ Pigmentation as a function of whiteness is of particular significance to this dissertation, since the Ethiopian eunuch is a black African man. His blackness serves as the antithesis of the ideal type of

Some of these meanings will be challenged in this dissertation by the literary tools of whiteness and ‘critical conviviality’. Indeed, the critical tools of whiteness and ‘critical conviviality’ demand that the blackness of the Ethiopian eunuch be kept in plain sight for modern, postmodern and postcolonial biblical readerships. His name is a means of contestation and will help to disrupt the Cartesian gaze and bring about restitution for his humanity.

It is prudent to acknowledge, however, that even though we are insisting on holding his blackness before the reader it is, as an act of strategic essentialism, a provisional act. His Ethiopianness need not be foregrounded *ad infinitum* (or *ad nauseum* for that matter) in every context. There might be times when his ‘eunuchness’ or sexuality calls for literary emphasis on my part. However, for the purposes of this dissertation, I am asserting his Ethiopianness, in the sense that ‘black lives matter’, as part of an ‘articulated’ agency: the Ethiopian eunuch.

My Social Location and Bracketing

It is useful to acknowledge one’s social location as a vested researcher for therein lies assumption, presuppositions, biases and prejudices. In which case, my personal profile is commensurate with what Simon Samuel names, “Diasporic Intercultural (subcultural) model”.¹²¹ I share this not to make the reader self-conscious about their difference and thereby distance them, but to invite the reader to a shared proximity through self-revelation.

Given my own social location as a British African Caribbean, postcolonial, second-generation ‘migrant’/ ‘settler’ male, the diasporic intercultural model¹²²

whiteness, yet his Africanity conjures up enormous historical baggage for the colonial reader. Worse still, his sexuality is clothed in blackness, rendering his masculinity as either a hypersexual or hyposexual, seductive or loathsome. Indeed, his blackness cannot be separated from his masculinity. His blackness occupies an interstitial, liminal, agonistic space. It is not merely a site of oppositionality, but of contestation.

¹²¹ Simon Samuel, *A Postcolonial Reading of Mark’s Story of Jesus* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 22–24.

¹²² Examples of the diasporic intercultural model are: Francisco O. Garcia-Treto, ‘Exile in the Hebrew Bible:

does provide some insight into an approach to the Ethiopian eunuch story that can be had from a hybridised margin. I do have a sense of displacement and ambiguity towards my identity and see myself somewhere within the subcultural matrix of the black Atlantic.¹²³ This is partially because my black Christian heritage has often celebrated the spirit of my ancestors.¹²⁴ Occupying this liminal, interstitial space can sensitise me to the possible in-between spaces that the Ethiopian eunuch occupies. Though my space is a psychological and conceptual one, and like the Ethiopian eunuch's a conceptual space constructed by others, my sensibility can allow me to see new possibilities for understanding his story.

I am in the European hegemony but not of it, a product of what Michel-Rolph Trouillot calls the 'miracle of creolization'.¹²⁵ And this double consciousness¹²⁶

A Postcolonial Look from the Cuban Diaspora', in *They Were All Together in One Place? Toward Minority Biblical Criticism*, eds. Randall C. Bailey, Tat-Siong Benny Liew, and Fernando F. Segovia, SemeiaSt 57 (Atlanta: SBL, 2009), 65–78; Frank M. Yamada, 'What Does Manzanar Have to Do with Eden? A Japanese American Interpretation of Genesis 2-3', in *They Were All Together in One Place? Toward Minority Biblical Criticism*, 97–118; *Yet with a Steady Beat: Contemporary U.S. Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Randall C. Bailey, SemeiaSt 42 (Atlanta: SBL, 2002); *Samuel, A Postcolonial Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*.

¹²³ The black Atlantic is Paul Gilroy's term that sees the black diasporic communities around the Atlantic basin as a historically shared, transnational community comprising a common culture rather than appendages affixed to the majority cultures of the Americas and Europe. See Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London; New York: Verso, 1993), 58. This transnational community, the black Atlantic, signifies the formation of transactional identities around the commonality of the historical legacy of the sailing ship: slavery and music. And to this list one could easily add religion and spirituality. It is contradistinctive to the 'white Atlantic'. Robert Stam and Ella Shohat, *Race in Translation: Culture Wars around the Postcolonial Atlantic* (New York: NYU Press, 2012), xv, 26. For a critique of 'white Atlantic', which articulates Atlantic history from the point of view of European colonisers, see David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

¹²⁴ Much has been made of the inextricable link between religion and chattel slavery. See for example, Paul Harvey, *Christianity and Race in the American South: A History* (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 2016). David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). Even the Church of (SPG) owned slaves through its 1701 Royal Chartered organisation, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, where they were branded across their chest with the word, 'society'. For an account of the activities of SPG see, Travis Glasson, *Mastering Christianity: Missionary Anglicanism and Slavery in the Atlantic World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Rowan Strong, 'A Vision of an Anglican Imperialism: The Annual Sermons of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts 1701–1714', *Journal of Religious History*, 30.2 (2006): 175–198.

¹²⁵ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Culture on the Edges: Creolization in the Plantation Context," *PSAm* 5.1 (1998): 8–28. For a critical reflection, see Richard Price, "The Miracle of Creolization: A Retrospective," *NWIG* 75.1/2 (2001): 35–64.

¹²⁶ See W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. Brent Hayes Edwards (Oxford; New York: Oxford

inevitably has a bearing on how I approach the biblical text. My lack *in* (not *of*) Eurocentrism¹²⁷ in examining the biblical studies canon in relation to the subjectivity of the Ethiopian eunuch should not be construed in terms of dilution, weakness or loss. Indeed, my liminality will commend itself to be seen as a necessary, vigorous constitutive of ‘critical conviviality’.¹²⁸ That this constituted ‘critical conviviality’ might amount to a transgressive optic, should rather find appeal for a more creative and transformative outcome in unexpected, yet fertile places.¹²⁹

I acknowledge that my positionality is fed by a hermeneutic of suspicion (with respect to the colonising impulse of whiteness), which when yoked with Sandra Harding’s notion of standpoint theory, says that my black optic is plausibly positioned to resist “an oppressor’s institutionalized vision”.¹³⁰ Yet I have to be

University Press, 2007), 8. Double consciousness is the conflictual condition of the African American, as (s)he is come to be known, when (s)he chronically experiences herself/himself through the racialised eyes of the her/his white oppressor. Their gaze displaces his/her citizenry and race. However, the experience does not remain repressive, but rather in a Hegelian sense (i.e., the master-slave dialectic) – Du Bois was well read in Hegel – is used to her/his advantage. (S)he is able to inhabit both worlds at the same time – the white and the black; the civic and negroid body – and is able to negotiate them with some guile, foresight and perspicacity, enabling a richer consciousness.

¹²⁷ I assume that there is an inculcated Eurocentric lineage to my education some of which still needs to be undone by virtue of being educated in post-empire UK.

¹²⁸ What Gilroy said of the likes of Frederick Douglass in his instantiation of Du Bois’s ‘double consciousness’ could equally be said of me: “[the] preoccupation with the striking doubleness that results from this unique position — in an expanded West but not completely of it — is a definitive characteristic of the intellectual history of the black Atlantic”.

¹²⁹ Africana studies could be seen as part of this strategy. See Reiland Rabaka, *Africana Critical Theory: Reconstructing the Black Radical Tradition, from W. E. B. Du Bois and C. L. R. James to Frantz Fanon and Amílcar Cabral* (Lanham, MD: London: Lexington Books, 2010). For an introduction to the metaphysics that drive Africana studies see Lewis R. Gordon, *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Lewis R. Gordon, *Existential Africana: Understanding Africana Existential Thought* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000); Akin Ogundiran, ‘African Atlantic Archaeology and Africana Studies: A Programmatic Agenda’, *African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter* 11.2 (2008): 1–25.

¹³⁰ Sandra Harding, *Sciences from Below: Feminisms, Postcolonialities, and Modernities* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 120. Harding’s standpoint theory evolves from feminist theory, theorising that the feminist instinct against patriarchy and misogyny is a valid one. Patricia Hill Collins twins this theory more specifically with intersectional theory. See, John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora*, The Biblical Resource Series, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 195–210.

constantly vigilant that the political interests of my own voice do not drown the voice of Luke's pericope and literary interests. To achieve this balance requires an approach sometimes referred to as bracketing and intuiting. The former is where assumptions, opinions and presuppositions are held in abeyance at a critical distance when reflexively examining the data. At the same time, intuiting draws from the space of liminality, hybridity and marginality, as characterised for example by that of subculture, for the impetus to prod for and prompt further questions.¹³¹

Outline

In which case, chapter 1 will begin inductively with 'Finding a Hermeneutic', the specifics of which are further honed in the beginning of chapters 2 and 3 for their respective foci. Inductively, because it will process postcolonial theory for its epistemological roots, impulse and impetus in order to develop a useful hermeneutic for examining the conceptualities of different premodern and modern (conjunctural) readerships.¹³² It will be demonstrated that, in light of the research question, two literary tropes of whiteness and 'critical conviviality' are derived from the impulse of postcolonial critical theory that can plausibly serve as hermeneutical lenses. Here, I locate my own sociohistorical bearing as a researcher, refusing to evade the responsibility of how this might relate to the political and social significance of this research, which is in part to reconstitute

¹³¹ The Husserlian notion of bracketing and intuiting is normally associated with the social sciences. For how it is adopted in religious studies see, Francis Rakotoane, 'Introduction to Religious Studies', in *Biblical Studies, Theology, Religion and Philosophy: An Introduction for African Universities*, ed. by Fidelis Nkomazana and Obed N. Kealotswe (Eldoret, Kenya: Zapf Chancery, 2010), 258. John Barton refers to the process as 'bracketing out' – John Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism* (Louisville; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 171–5 – although his focus is mainly on suspending one's truth or religious belief.

¹³² Conventional postcolonial criticism is not typically applied to opening up particular epistemologies of dominant readerships – a point I take up in chapter 1. Contrastingly, it tends to be interested in approaches that seek to subvert the historicity and historiographical claims of these readerships by focussing on their texts. See Rubén Muñoz-Larrondo, *A Postcolonial Reading of the Acts of the Apostles*, Studies in Biblical Literature 147 (New York: Peter Lang, 2012) for an example of an application of a postcolonial method to the historical context of Acts.

narrative histories or historiographies; to engage in an emancipatory project that provides a corrective transformation; and to foster an inclusive understanding of ethnographical realities.

Upon examining the form, tone and imagery of the Patristic writers in chapter 2 – ‘The Whitening of the Ethiopian Eunuch: The Politics of Jewish and Graeco-Gentile Identities within the Patristic Corpus’ – an imperial imagination will be seen to continue to intervene and interrupt the place, role and characterisations of the Ethiopian Eunuch through exegesis, othering and falsification, and deny him the basis for conceptuality, epistemological agency and value. To process this, I will employ ethnic reasoning to uncover the formational and disruptive interventions that the different literary Church Fathers might have had in conceptualising the Ethiopian eunuch. Upon examination of these first commentators of the second to sixth centuries, the Ethiopian eunuch’s ethnoreligious agency is discovered to have shifted conjuncturally from a Jewish one to a Graeco-Gentile one. The anti-Jewish *Adversus Judaeos* discourse of the time functioned teleologically to organise the Fathers’ biblical interpretations in achieving this particular religious-political ideal type.

Part 2 shifts focus from the task of deconstructive critique to the labour of reconstruction, while continuing to develop the theoretical arguments of Part 1. It too comprises two chapters. Chapter 3 – ‘Critical Conviviality, Luke and Acts’ – sets the stage for chapter 4. To do this, it sets the background for understanding the imperial conceptuality that constricts the agency/identity of the intersectionally complex Ethiopian eunuch in modern conjunctural sites of Anglophone scholarship. This background forms the basis for the work of chapter 4. Essentially, chapter 3 theoretically develops the hermeneutic of ‘critical conviviality’ as a means for conceptualising Luke as a postcolonial, cosmopolitan theologian who had a broad perspective of what the ethnoreligious landscape of

first century Judaism was like. It will become clear that notions of ethnicity as refracted through terms like *Ιουδαῖοι* (and its cognates), *ὁ λαός*, *τὸ ἔθνος* (*τὰ ἔθνη*) and *γένος* are not biologically inscribed, but are floating, composite signifiers that are contingent on land, religious life, relationships and a broad collective of peoples. Therefore, first century (Afroasiatic) Judaism was neither exclusively beholden to a Graeco-Roman nor rabbinic ocular benchmark.

Given Luke's proposed identity and the convivial framework of the background of Acts, a socio-religious profile, accenting the Ethiopian eunuch's ethnoreligious agency, will be constructed from the biblical text in chapter 4 – 'The Plot and Conceptual Tropes'. I will identify two literary signatures to provide a critical mass of data, which may tip the verdict on his identity, albeit cautiously, in favour of imaging a plausibly fully-fledged, even if a distant, diasporic Jew.¹³³ These are the socioreligious tropes of pilgrimage and representation. Against this profile will the question of 'why cannot the Ethiopian eunuch be a Jew?' be vitiated. Then, it will be shown that Luke's use of the Ethiopian eunuch in his discursive strategy might be made to deconstruct the ethnoreligious sensibilities of different, successive audiences. In this way, it will contribute to a fuller conceptuality for a postcolonial agency of the Ethiopian eunuch as a diasporic

¹³³ I could refer to the Ethiopian eunuch in the more ancient term, 'Hebrew', thereby denoting a nonrabbinic 'Jewish' lineage, since the appellative, 'Jewish', is more than likely a post-exilic (i.e., post-Babylonian exilic) term probably designated to reconstruct an ethnoreligious, national(istic) past. (I am tendering nationalistic as a notion born from nationalism.) That is not to say that there could be no notion of a post-exilic Hebrew. Nevertheless, the term 'Jew' and its cognates – inclusive of 'Jewishness' – will be tentatively assigned to the Ethiopian eunuch since these are the recognised appellatives that speak historically to notions of Jewishness in its broad sense. I attach 'Hebrewism' with the language of Hebrew and related issues. The 'Hebrew', however, is in this dissertation generically related on balance to the ethnoreligion and culture of pre-exilic Judaism. The fourth century BCE biblical book of Esther is normally credited with first technical usage of 'Jew'. This is different to the later (Hellenic) development of *Ἰουδαϊσμός* [Judaism], which refers to the Jewish way of life as shaped after the Babylonian exile – cf. 2 Macc. 2:21; 8:1; 14:38; 4 Macc. 4:26; *EstRab* 7, 11; and later in Gal. 1:13-14 in contrast with *Χριστιανισμός*). My thinking is that prior to this invention of the term Jew, i.e., prior to the fifth century BCE Babylonian exile, the Jews were Hebrews in the multicultural/multi-tribal/diasporic sense of the word with a worldview that predated rabbinic Judaism. Hence, the 'Jewishness' of the Ethiopian eunuch being proffered is that of a nonrabbinic, non-Graeco-Roman Jew. Critically, this means that the term should not be conflated with the much later accrued political currency of modernity.

Jew. Moreover, it will consider what damage the legacy of an imperial, Cartesian gaze can do to and beyond a text that allows for a dynamic, creative and improvisational conceptualisation.

In light of the foregoing, the dissertation concludes with a reflection on how obfuscation of the socio-political realities of the biblical text could deny the imagination of current readers and hearers of new opportunities and possibilities of a vision of racial inclusiveness, universal diversity and Christian origins. One has only to examine maps of the New Testament (NT) world, for example, to see the paucity of information on the Ethiopian kingdom, even though Ethiopia has been co-opted into the Lukan (Acts) worldview. Nubia or Cush as Africa is simply not there; only the northern tip of the Nile, Egypt, colonised and valorised as part of a conurbated Eurocentric ‘Ancient Near East’.¹³⁴

Now we will see, that if there is what appears to be a sustained oversight by successive readerships of perceived non-European interests in the text, then there might be systemic epistemological blind spots that need to be identified and corrected. Otherwise, a hegemonic domination of interpretation of the text will persist and continue to exclude ‘the ethnoreligious Other’ and undermine an enriched import of the text. The whiteness analytic demands a ‘critical conviviality’.

¹³⁴ These maps tend to go as far south as Thebes and Hierakonpolis. In fact, to find Africa one has to peruse OT maps. See Martin, ‘A Chamberlain’s Journey’, 111–116, 121, where she refers to this phenomenon as a “politics of omission”. One wonders if such politics was operative in Strabo’s comment about Africa being considered the smallest and the least significant continent (17.3.1) and whether this influenced the confinement of Luke’s short excursion with the Ethiopian Eunuch.

PART ONE

Chapter 1

1. FINDING A HERMENEUTIC

*For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support.*¹³⁵
–Audre Lorde

1.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to establish an appropriate hermeneutical framework for interrogating the incentive for and nature of dominant epistemologies that biblical exegetes and commentators exert in conceptualising the agency of the Ethiopian eunuch narrative in Acts 8.26-40. It will be demonstrated that given the nature of an epistemological gaze, an impulse of postcolonial theory, rather than its conventional use would best provide a strategy for opening up the reader's conceptuality by use of the question: 'why cannot the Ethiopian eunuch be conceived as a Jew?' The derived literary tropes of whiteness and 'critical conviviality' as a function of the impulse of postcolonial criticism will then be constructed as conceptual lenses to aid in exposing the hegemonic conceptuality and displacing the imperialist discourse of the academy. Nevertheless, however efficacious the chosen hermeneutic is demonstrated to be the epigraph of Audre Lorde introducing this chapter serves as a reminder that it cannot be exhaustive,

¹³⁵ Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2012), 112.

complete and universalised. At best, it is approximate and temporary. Neither methodologies nor methods can change a structural system of domination. They might provide ‘push back’ worthy of providing emancipatory spaces. But their enterprise is severely limited. Yet, this is only daunting to exegetes who define “the master’s house as their only source of support”.¹³⁶

1.2 A Postcolonial Impulse

Postcolonial theory cannot be conventionally applied to the research question, ‘why cannot the Ethiopian eunuch be a Jew?’ because the question appeals to an epistemological framing, i.e., the domain of the imaginary, which determines the gaze. Then the question may be construed as, ‘why cannot the Ethiopian eunuch be conceptualised or imaged as a fully-fledged Jew?’ thereby challenging the positioning of the reader’s inculcated imaginary, which a suitably emancipatory hermeneutic can expose.

A postcolonial critical method strictly applied would typically require deconstructing the historical circumstances and colonial context of Acts, not to mention those of the Ethiopian eunuch. While the former approach is to some extent feasible, it has little relevance for the Ethiopian eunuch, if at all. The historical, colonial context of the Ethiopian, on the other hand, is simply inapplicable since at that time Ethiopia, the Kingdom of Cush, was not colonised. During the time of Acts, Ethiopia was an independent empire,¹³⁷ largely untouched by the expansionism of Rome. Although in Acts 8:26-40, Ethiopia meets Rome on its own terms, this is less a meeting of empires and conceptually more a meeting, I will argue in Part 2, of religious brothers, albeit separated by

¹³⁶ Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 112.

¹³⁷ Ethiopia was variously known as the Kingdom of Cush or the Axumite (Aksumite) Empire.

two Jewish (diasporic) traditions. They are occupying, to use James Clifford's words, 'differently-centred' but 'interconnected' spaces within the 'desert place' (Acts 8:26).¹³⁸ This is not to say that historical assertions are not important or that the project of historical recovery of the biblical text is futile. As Hall puts it: "The attempt to snatch from the hidden histories another place to stand in, another place to speak from – that moment is extremely important."¹³⁹ But, as he would agree, historical recovery will always be incomplete, deficient and complicit though never negligible. This would be the case with the Ethiopian eunuch no matter what historical, circumstantial evidence there might be.

¹³⁸ James Clifford, 'Travelling Cultures', in *Cultural Studies*, ed. by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler (London: Routledge, 2013), 96–112.

¹³⁹ Stuart Hall, 'The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity', in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation and Postcolonial Perspectives*, eds. Anne McClintock, Aamir Rashid Mufti, and Ella Shohat (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 184. Hall's language of *snatching* has allusions to the trope of occulted histories, otherwise known as haunting histories – reading strategies that foreground colonial history as occulted or haunted by violent, evil practices of colonialism, producing memories and legacies that taunt, traumatise and pathologise the reader. This reading strategy appears to be inspired variously by Marx's *Manifesto of the Communist Party*: "A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of communism. All the Powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this spectre", in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, trans. Samuel Moore (London: Wildside Press LLC, 2008 [1848]), 7; and, on the other hand, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (London: Vintage, 1997 [1987]), where *Beloved* is the embodied ghost that comes back to haunt her mother's household with the *re-membering* (repeated memories reinscribed within her body) of a ghastly, violent past before being exorcised. Some examples of reading colonial texts spurred by the lens of haunting are: Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York; London: Routledge, 2006 [1993]); Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, 2nd rev. ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008 [1997]); Alfred J. Lopez, *Posts and Pasts: A Theory of Postcolonialism*, Suny Series, Explorations in Postcolonial Studies (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001); Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006). For a theological adoption of the hermeneutic within a New Testament framework, see Denise Kimber Buell, 'God's Own People: Specters of Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in Early Christian Studies', in *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings: Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christianity*, ed. Laura Nasrallah (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2009), 159–90. For a problematisation of the hermeneutic of haunting see Michael F. O'Riley, 'Postcolonial Haunting: Anxiety, Affect, and the Situated Encounter', *Postcolonial Text* 3 (2007): 1–15. For an excellent example of applying the hermeneutic as theological tropes, see Robert Beckford, *Documentary as Exorcism: Resisting the Bewitchment of Colonial Christianity* (London: Continuum, 2014). Beckford goes a step further in viewing the occulted histories of colonial Christianity [read cannibalism and zombism] as producing *bewitchment* (where the body is cannibalised and the mind zombified) in the colonised (and, I would argue, in the coloniser at least in respect to their Cartesian optic), which has to be exorcised. Documentary filmmaking, such as Beckford's *Black Messiah*, *God is Black*, *Empire Pays Back* and *The Great African Scandal*, is instantiated as an emancipatory lever to fulfil this aim.

For this reason, the basis of the interpretative lens will be the impulse of postcolonial theory. By impulse, I am referring to an engagement with its ‘spirit’ or impetus rather than adhering to its strict historicising application. That is not to say that the letter of the theory is irrelevant, for the impulse could hardly be discernible without the peculiarly historicised development of its approach. However, I am interested in the type of questions that it stimulates more than the conventional methods it prescribes; questions that are aimed at the epistemological gaze. In which case, the vast and amorphous field of postcolonial theory has been acutely ‘assembled’ in the next section to engage critically the epistemological concerns that intersect with the story and personhood of the Ethiopian eunuch.

1.3 *Postcolonial Orthography*

Postcolonialism, which probably took its inspiration from Franz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* (French original 1952)¹⁴⁰ and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961),¹⁴¹ is variously iterated in the terms postcoloniality, postcolonial studies,

¹⁴⁰ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. The claim that Fanon takes precedent in postcolonial studies is reflected by a number of noted scholars: Homi K Bhabha, ‘Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche, and the Colonial Condition’, Forward to *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1986); Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2001), where Fanon is canonised in the history of poststructuralism; Anthony Kwame Appiah’s “Foreword” to Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York; Berkeley: Grove Press / Atlantic Monthly Press, 2007); *Rethinking Fanon: The Continuing Dialogue*, ed. Nigel Gibson (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1999); and JanMohamed’s repositioning of Fanon within a Manichean binary in Abdul R. JanMohamed, ‘The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonial Literature’, in *Race, Writing and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 78–106.

¹⁴¹ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (London; New York: Penguin Classics, 2001). Both of Fanon’s texts were largely unknown to the Anglophone literary world before being introduced by their interlocutor, Edward Said, who later wrote *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 1978). This, in turn, triggered the onset of postcolonial theory, arguably along with Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1981). These approaches emphasised how characters originating from the global South were essentialised, stereotyped and demonised by readers from the global North, very much in the way that the Ethiopian eunuch will be shown (in chapter 2) to have been orientalised.

postcolonial theory and postcolonial criticism.¹⁴² It refers broadly to the social and cultural phenomena – conversations, protests, political campaigns, insurgencies, and writings – of anti-colonial struggles during and after colonialism.¹⁴³ Given its uneven development – it is unwieldy and fractious – it holds at times contradictory positions in its historical iterations,¹⁴⁴ some of which went unheeded and sent mixed messages in its critique.

¹⁴² Bart J. Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London; New York: Verso, 1997), usefully distinguishes between postcolonial theory and postcolonial criticism (p. 12). Noting its theoretical derivations, he defines postcolonial theory as: “Work, which is shaped primarily, or to a significant degree, by methodological affiliations to French ‘high’ theory – notably Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault. In practice, this will mean the work of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha” (p. 1). Postcoloniality perhaps, then, focuses on the historical dimensions of postcolonialism from its inception of colonialism (see Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies*, 119–33), while postcolonial studies refer to the actual academic discipline.

¹⁴³ The development of postcolonial studies has been variously assembled. Some critics, like Young, attempt to reconstruct it along historical lines – Young, *Postcolonialism: Historical*; others conceptualise it along gendered lines – Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge; New York: Harvard University Press, 1999); still others along geopolitical lines – Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures*, 2nd ed. (London; New York: Routledge, 2002, [1989]) – some, such as John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* (Manchester, UK ; New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 25–9, and Phyllis Taoua, ‘The Postcolonial Condition’, in *The Cambridge Companion to the African Novel*, ed. F. Abiola Irele (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 209; R. S. Sugirtharajah, ‘Charting the Aftermath: A Review of Postcolonial Criticism’, in *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Oxford; Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 15, see this text as pivotal to the proliferation of postcolonial studies. Yet, some review it developmentally along the salient, conceptual invocations of the triumvirate, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha – Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory*. Incidentally, Young describes Said, Spivak and Bhabha as the Holy Trinity of colonial-critical discourse: Young, *Colonial Desire*, 163. Said, by combing through colonial literature as cultural texts with Foucauldian lens, identifies an undeniable propensity for practices of orientalism – i.e., the essentialising and valorisation of the oriental Other as inferior, subordinate and savage. Spivak pushes the deconstruction method of Derrida further to analyse the depth of the subaltern’s plight. Bhabha, spurred on by the psychoanalytical method of Fanon and Lacan, identifies the liminal spaces of anxieties and insecurities between the coloniser and colonised that characterise the instability and ambiguity of the processes of colonial domination. Others survey postcolonial studies along regional lines – Stephanie Newell, *West African Literatures Ways of Reading* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Bagele Chilisa, *Indigenous Research Methodologies* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2012), where Afrocentric studies play a major part. Cf. Stephen Howe, *Afrocentrism: Mythical Pasts and Imagined Homes* (London; New York: Verso, 1998), who critiques the limitation of Afrocentric discourse. Still others as a critique of modernisation – Gurinder K Bhambra, *Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

¹⁴⁴ One might conclude, as do Lazare S. Rukundwa and Andries G. van Aarde, ‘The Formation of Postcolonial Theory’, *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 63.3 (2007): 1171–1194, that postcolonial studies arises out of the contested spaces of anti-slavery and anticolonial struggle by providing a means of “defiance by which any exploitative and discriminative practices ... can be challenged”.

Therefore, certain positions taken in this dissertation need to be clearly nuanced, (re-)defined and rationalised for their effective deployment. Consequently, this due diligence will inform the specific ways that postcolonial theory relates to whiteness and ‘critical conviviality’. The ensuing conceptual terms have a direct bearing on the ethnoreligious conceptualisation, imaginary and imaging of the Ethiopian eunuch and his story. Thus, they must be constantly borne in mind, especially when applying whiteness and ‘critical conviviality’ as analytical tools.

1.3.1 Identity Politics vs. the Politics of Identity

In USA, identity politics surfaced principally through the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. This, in turn, inspired parallel activities in UK, though without its antecedent’s institutional formalisation.¹⁴⁵ However, partly as a response and principally through the pen of Stuart Hall, postcolonial theory appeared to raise questions of identity politics by arguing for a shift of emphasis to a politics of identity:

Looking at new conceptions of identity requires us also to look at redefinitions of the forms of politics which follow that: the politics

¹⁴⁵ See the work of the activists who instigated the bus boycott in Bristol in 1963, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-21574799>, accessed 19 February 2014. See also the story of Xavier Asquith who protested and won against British Railways on 15 July 1966 for their long-standing racial exclusion of African-Caribbeans from operating as platform guards on the underground: <https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2010/jul/16/archive-colour-bar-ends-at-all-london-1966>. The Guardian Newspaper (16 July 1966) quoted: “The Standing Conference of West Indian Organisations last night welcomed Mr Leppington's announcement [British Railways divisional manager], but expressed scepticism about whether it really meant the end of every type of colour prejudice in British Rail”. The Standing Conference of West Indian Organisations was founded in 1960-1961 in response to the 1958 Notting Hill riots, at the behest of the then High Commission of the federated government of the West Indies and not the African-Caribbean migrants cum settlers themselves. See Kalbir Shukra, *The Changing Pattern of Black Politics in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1998), 10. Furthermore, during the mix of these times, the black Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) along with other sister movements was formed. It emerged as a counterpart to the predominately white international AAM, which it felt was too elitist, concerned only with the plight of black racism and discrimination in South Africa and not with that at home in Britain. Instead of attaching itself to the African National Congress, the black AAM formed ties with the Pan Africanist Congress. See, Elizabeth M. Williams, *The Politics of Race in Britain and South Africa: Black British Solidarity and the Anti-Apartheid Struggle* (London; New York: I B Tauris, 2015).

of difference, the politics of self-reflexivity, a politics that is open to contingency but still able to act.¹⁴⁶

This conjunctural shift to a politics of identity in contradistinction to, yet possible articulation with,¹⁴⁷ identity politics is particularly relevant to the formation of understanding subjecthood in our study. It comes to the fore with shifting the question from, ‘who is the Ethiopian eunuch?’ or ‘what is the subjectivity of the Ethiopian eunuch?’ to, ‘whose (version) is the Ethiopian eunuch’s and what does this version of articulated subjectivity mean?’ The shift from ‘who’ or ‘what’ to ‘whose’ and ‘meaning’ is a shift from identity politics to the politics of identity. As with the earlier critique of Keener’s research on the ethnoreligious identity of the Ethiopian eunuch, it is a shift from (Keener’s) identity fixation to epistemic analysis. It foregrounds questions such as: What epistemes in the conceptuality of the reader prevents the Ethiopian eunuch from being imaged as a Jew, and why? Indeed, why can he not be a Jew? Are there political and epistemic reasons (and ramifications) for why he cannot be a Jew?

Couching the question, ‘why cannot the Ethiopian eunuch be imaged as a Jew?’, in the negative is helpful for a number of reasons when viewed in light of the conjunctural shift of Hall’s postulate of the politics of identity. First, the Ethiopian eunuch’s subjectivity is constrictive when thought of merely in terms of identity.¹⁴⁸ This is because identity politics essentialises the autonomy of the self

¹⁴⁶ Stuart Hall, ‘Minimal Selves’, in *Identity - The Real Me: Postmodernism and the Question of Identity*, ed. Homi K Bhabha (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1987), 45. This seminal essay forms the basis for Hall’s 1988 essay, Stuart Hall, ‘New Ethnicities’, in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. by Kuan-Hsing Chen and David Morley (London; New York: Routledge, 1996 [1988]), 441–49, which examines the shift in the politics of identity and representation in the 1980s.

¹⁴⁷ See Stuart Hall, ‘Minimal Selves’, 117. The possibility of articulation is allowed for by a historical conjuncture. This would then produce a net result of something that is very different to its constituent parts: “Hall’s theorising is conjunctural in the sense that it is always informed by and articulated as a response to, events at a particular moment.” Procter, *Stuart Hall*, 54.

¹⁴⁸ Note that a preliminary definition of ‘subjectivity’ as a basis for agency would be that of a conjunctural, decentred site of multiple, intersected identities contested, fragmented, and incomplete, yet produced by and positioned not only within the discourse of the author – in our case, Luke – but the reader’s conceptuality.

as ownership. ‘One owns one’s body, therefore one has full sovereignty in the self-determination of one’s own body’. The body wears the identity. (Body here could easily be commensurate with body politic.) Apart from the inherent anti-collectivist streak, which would have been alien to the collectivist regime of the Ethiopian eunuch’s background and culture,¹⁴⁹ this reasoning is characteristic of a racial logic. It is a racial logic predicated on racial fixity; a fixity that circumscribes the body, rendering it propertied, commodified. The moment of racial or ethnic reasoning is the moment of racial or ethnic fixation – of identity formation. Hence, identity politics is propertied. On the other hand, the Ethiopian eunuch cannot be mobilised as an uncomplicated, monolithic, essentialised whole, since his identity is, at least, marked by difference and (the Derridian) *différance* – wherein his subjectivity constitutes many differences as opposed to a single one (and this cuts against the grain of simplistic binary oppositions between the reader and the literary subject).

Second, the question framed in the negative (why cannot the Ethiopian eunuch be a Jew?) also forces a consideration of a politics of identity marked by reflexivity. It is the reflexivity aspect of the question, as posed in the negative, which interrogates the conceptuality of the reader for their epistemic blind spots.

Finally, the negatively framed question forces a consideration of a politics of identity marked by contingency. It interrogates the conceptuality of the reader as to whether (s)he has considered that the subjectivity of the Ethiopian eunuch is

Yet, the political import of the conjunctural, decentred site will always be in tension with a constructed, racialised projection of the Ethiopian eunuch as African, as black.

¹⁴⁹ I understand culture to be a complex, polyvalent notion. While it may be referring to custom, art and social institutions that suffuse a people’s living and dying, it also refers to historically inculcated “beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member’s behaviour and his/her interpretations of the ‘meaning’ of other people’s behaviour”, Helen Spencer-Oatey, *Culturally Speaking: Culture, Communication and Politeness Theory*, 2nd ed. (London; New York: Continuum, 2008), 3.

beholden to the details of the literary text – political or otherwise.¹⁵⁰ As will be presented (in Part 2), this has considerable ramification for imagining possible dimensions of the Ethiopian eunuch's agency.

However, (Spivakian) strategic (and therefore temporary) essentialism¹⁵¹ is a necessary articulation, if for no other reason than to disrupt the dominant gaze of the Eurocentric conceptuality, which essentialises the emergence of Christianity as all things white, negating any originary moment outside of its orbit. It is within this dialectic – between essentialised identities, multiple identities, their positioning within the discourse, and how these speak to the commentator's gaze – that the focus of this dissertation is situated. Here resides the conjunctural counterpoint to inform the postcolonial impulse of our hermeneutic: that while the politics of the Ethiopian eunuch's identity is necessary in approaching our research question, the deployment of a strategic identity politics is useful to disrupt the modernist optic to remind one that black lives matter in the origins of Christianity. Hence, the maintenance of the double-barrelled nomenclature: the Ethiopian eunuch. 'Why cannot the Ethiopian eunuch be a Jew?' is a deliberative question, which has the rhetorical force of foregrounding both the question of the politics of the Ethiopian eunuch's identity and his identity politics. Both lay bare for the reader epistemological assumptions and conceptions that may deny the African his plausible ethnoreligious agency.

¹⁵⁰ See Procter, *Stuart Hall*, 119–21, for a further development of this thought.

¹⁵¹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography', in *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, eds. Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean (New York: Routledge, 1995 [1985]), 214. Spivak, against the conventional criticism of essentialism, advocates strategic essentialism as a (temporary) means to a political end, while recognising that the essentialism does not completely define one's core essence: it is a "strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest." Negritude would be an example of permanent essentialism. See : Léopold Sédar Senghor, *The Foundations of 'Africanité' or 'Négritude' and 'Arabité.'*, trans. Mercer Cook (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1971); and Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. by Robin D. G. Kelley, New Edition (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000 [1955]).

1.3.2 The Cartesian Gaze

The gaze is a way of looking. In postcolonialism, it is typically an imperial way of looking. It is more than the objectifying, medical gaze, which Foucault defines.¹⁵² It is a gaze, in Jonathan Schroeder's sense, which "implies more than to look at – it signifies a psychological relationship of power, in which the gazer is superior to the object of the gaze."¹⁵³ With respect to the Ethiopian eunuch, it would reflect the reader's ideological perspective – a perspective that dialectically colours his or her conceptuality.¹⁵⁴ The Ethiopian eunuch as the object (or subject) of the gaze will always be imagined as potentially qualitatively different. This would inevitably relate to his social construction, bearing, and notions of being, relating and belonging.

This is why a postmodernism optic, which tends towards the abstract, in theoretical altitudes, pinning down anything that had overtones of absolutism, is insufficient. Victoria Burrows views it as "the masked whiteness of theory" principally because of its systematic silencing of black voices.¹⁵⁵ However, the celebrated African scholar, Denis Ekpo, suggests a psychoanalytical explanation that is nothing short of a crisis of the consciousness within the subjectivity of the global North, linking postmodernism to the now vacuous ambitions of colonial history:

The crisis of the subject and its radical and violent deflation – the focal point of [postmodern] critique – are logical consequences of the absurd self-inflation that the European subjectivity had

¹⁵² Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, 135–36.

¹⁵³ Jonathan Schroeder, *Visual Consumption* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), 58.

¹⁵⁴ Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), 140. Yet, this conceptuality is reinforced by the suffusion of feelings that are generated by the relationship the gazer has with the (imagined) object of the gaze – a relationship that is informed by desire and fear.

¹⁵⁵ Victoria Burrows, *Whiteness and Trauma: The Mother-Daughter Knot in the Fiction of Jean Rhys, Jamaica Kincaid and Toni Morrison* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 161.

undergone in its modernist ambition to be the salt of the earth, the measure and master of all things.¹⁵⁶

It would seem, drawing from Ekpo's quote, that though the postmodern gaze is self-critical it is conflicted by the huge moral failure of the colonial project. Consequently, it has produced a bewitchment of guilt for the European subject, whereby postmodern efforts to de-deify and de-absolutise reason is so tied to a Cartesian anthropology that the characterisation of its discourse is counter-intuitive and strange to the African's 'non-Cartesian' anthropology. Hence, postmodern efforts to redeem past colonial deeds are lost on the African's 'non-Cartesian' ear. It also has a bearing on how time is viewed; for Cartesian anthropology views time as a never-ending unfolding, linear progression.¹⁵⁷

Charles Mills describes the Cartesian individual as, "the presocial figure of contractarian theory", where history and social processes are abstracted "to get at ostensibly necessary and universal truths about people qua people, the deep eternalities of the human condition".¹⁵⁸ The notion of Cartesian anthropology is arguably iterated as Platonic dualism in early Hellenistic Christian thought and as Cartesian dualism in early modern, scientific thought.¹⁵⁹ Either way, it presumes

¹⁵⁶ Denis Ekpo, 'Towards a Post-Africanism: Contemporary African Thought and Postmodernism', *Textual Practice* 9 (1995): 126.

¹⁵⁷ There are two texts, in particular, that in a sense deals with the theological implication of the 'linear' view of time: Richard Bauckham and Trevor Hart, 'The Shape of Time', in *Future as God's Gift: Explorations in Christian Eschatology*, ed. by David Fergusson and Marcel Sarot (Edinburgh: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2000), 41–72.; and Christoph Schwöbel, 'Last Things First? The Century of Eschatology in Retrospect', in *Future as God's Gift: Explorations in Christian Eschatology*, ed. by David Fergusson and Marcel Sarot (Edinburgh: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2000), 217–22.

¹⁵⁸ Mills, *Blackness Visible*, xiv.

¹⁵⁹ Recently, there has been a move to reject Cartesian dualism in scientific thought. Back in 1935 the Nobel laureate Alexis Carrel suggested that it would take a paradigm shift for science to move away from Cartesian dualism – Alexis Carrel, *Man, the Unknown* (New York; London: Harper & Brothers, 1935), 258–60. This was echoed later by, for example, Paul Tournier, *The Whole Person in a Broken World* (London: Harper & Row, 1964). For a rehearsal of the shift see, for example, Ernst Mayr, *The Growth of Biological Thought: Diversity, Evolution and Inheritance*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982). For the establishment of the argument and shift see, Edward O. Wilson, *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2014), 107–8.

the reductionist presupposition that the body is subordinate to the mind, and history to ideas. Emotions and passions are disembodied in the human experience.

A fine example of this complex, intimate gaze is Stuart Hall's classic essay, "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities". Here he situates the English constitutional cup of tea as consummately constitutive of power struggles between economic productivity and exploited social structures – he does this by cross-referencing the 'connected histories' of the colonies as constitutive histories of modernity. So while the cup of tea in the spirit of the Cartesian gaze appeared to be an expression of a type of bourgeoisie life in colonising Britain, it, when considered in the spirit of the convivial gaze, encapsulated a very violent material history, which in many ways continues to undergird a representation of identity contingent on homogenous collectivities.¹⁶⁰ Good postcolonial criticism, then, interrogates this *articulated* nuance along with the convivial initiatives of decentring the disembodied, Cartesian subject like the Ethiopian eunuch.¹⁶¹

1.3.3 The Afroasiatic Strip

The term 'Afroasiatic strip' is enlisted to re-position the geo-political, epistemic centre of what is generally referred to in biblical studies as Palestine and the Ancient Near East (ANE) and today as the 'Middle East'.¹⁶² The term is borrowed from its linguistic usage, referring to the Afroasiatic languages of northwest, north and the north eastern regions of Africa (inclusive of Arabia) to form a

¹⁶⁰ Stuart Hall, 'Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities', in *Culture, Globalization and the World System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, ed. by Anthony D. King (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 41–68.

¹⁶¹ It may equally be applied within the fields of linguistics, psychoanalysis, and feminism, to name a few. For an explanation of the Cartesian subject in light of poststructuralist studies, see Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), 77–8; and for a deconstruction of the Cartesian self as the Cartesian sum vis-à-vis the black experience of the Ellisonian *Invisible Man*, see Charles W. Mills, *Blackness Visible*, 1–20.

¹⁶² Felder, 'Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation', 14.

family under which the Semitic languages (inclusive of Akkadian, Biblical Hebrew, Old Aramaic and Ge'ez, Arabic and Amharic) are *genera*.¹⁶³ Geographically, this would cover West Africa, North Africa, East Africa, Ethiopia down to the Horn of Africa, all of Arabia, Palestine and Syria.¹⁶⁴

When the term 'strip' is used instead of 'region', it more specifically refers to the western regions of the Levant, otherwise known as Palestine, as a counterpoint to the 'Middle East' or 'Ancient Near East', since these are geopolitical terms of the colonial British Empire with Asia being the Far (flung) East. Palestine is called the Afroasiatic strip, since this land is sandwiched between Asia and Africa. It denotes the historical and cultural influence of Asia to the north (including the northwest – Asia Minor [Μικρὰ Ἀσία] and northeast), Persia to the east (and northeast), and Africa to the south (and southwest).

The point will be made later in the dissertation that despite the formative shaping of the Afroasiatic strip by Asia and Africa, the Roman conquest in the first century BCE intensified the already Graeco-Roman influence on the strip. In light of this, the phrase 'Afroasiatic' will sometimes be placed strategically in brackets just before the phrase 'Second Temple' to forefront the agency of the Afroasiatic land in the conceptuality of the reader. Driven by the postcolonial impulse of 'critical conviviality', I am here interested in the politics of positionality, how it is construed, practiced, and applied, and how it may disrupt the Cartesian gaze of the imperialist imagination of biblical scholarship.

¹⁶³ Robert Hetzron, 'Afroasiatic Languages', ed. by Bernard Comrie, *The World's Major Languages* (Oxford; New York: Routledge, 2018), 545–50; Robert Hetzron and Alan S. Kaye, 'Semitic Languages', ed. by Bernard Comrie, *The World's Major Languages* (Oxford; New York: Routledge, 2018), 551–9. For an in-depth study of Afroasiatic languages, see *The Afroasiatic Languages*, ed. by Zygmunt Frajzyngier and Erin Shay (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), particularly chapters 1, 4 & 5.

¹⁶⁴ Saul Levin, *Semitic and Indo-European: Volume I: The Principal Etymologies. With Observations on Afro-Asiatic* (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 1995), 6–9.

1.3.4 Intersectionality

Given the multiple identities of the Ethiopian eunuch, the concept of intersectionality is invoked. Intersectionality is a concept coined by the legal scholar, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw,¹⁶⁵ and first grounded in Womanist Studies.¹⁶⁶ She developed the tool of intersectionality theory (later known as intersectional analysis) to illuminate the complex ways in which marginal identities are othered as ‘non-raced’ by white feminists.¹⁶⁷ In our case, intersectionality challenges the notion that identities can be singled out individually whilst objectively imagined within a ‘single-axis framework’; it highlights the interaction of multiple identities and thereby ‘the multiple dimensions’ of the Ethiopian eunuch’s agency in the face of the oppressive gaze.¹⁶⁸ Rather than think of him as a composite of identities it is best to think of him as a composite of differentiations, or better put ‘the effect of differentiation’.¹⁶⁹ And inequality is the product of this differentiation.

¹⁶⁵ Kimberlé Crenshaw, ‘Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics’, *The University of Chicago Legal Forum* 140 (1989): 139–167.

¹⁶⁶ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008). However, the concept was acknowledged long before womanist studies and epitomised in the lived experience of the nineteenth century abolitionist, Sojourner Truth. See Patricia C. McKissack, *Sojourner Truth: Ain’t I a Woman?* (New York: Scholastic, 1992). bell hooks drew on the famous speech of Truth, “Ain’t I a Woman?” to demonstrate the conjunctural identities that Truth so ably navigated. See bell hooks, *Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (London; Boston, MA: Pluto Press, 1982), 158–96.

¹⁶⁷ White feminists essentialised all women as undergoing similar oppressions at the hand of men without taken due account of the additional, but weighted axis of race. Famous among the essentialising feminist is Catharine MacKinnon, whose work has been robustly criticised by, among others, Angela Harris. See Angela P. Harris, ‘Race and Essentialism in Feminist Legal Theory’, *Stanford Law Review* 42.3 (1990): 581–616. In a later article, Crenshaw tempers Harris’s critique, but does maintain MacKinnon’s oversight in not given due nuance to issues relating to women of colour. See Kimberlé W. Crenshaw, ‘Close Encounters of Three Kinds: On Teaching Dominance Feminism and Intersectionality’, *Tulsa Law Review* 46 (2010): 151–189.

¹⁶⁸ Kimberlé Crenshaw, ‘Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color’, *Stanford Law Review* 43 (1991): 1244. I would broaden the vectors of identities beyond the original twin categories of race and gender – as it pertained to black women – to include other categories such as sexuality, nation, nationality, class and vocal accent, for example, as these are all sites of oppression.

¹⁶⁹ Different vectors of oppression seize the subject not so much in terms of her (essentialised) identities but her differentiated identities. Cynthia Levine-Rasky, ‘Intersectionality Theory Applied to Whiteness and

This layered experience is multiplicative, not additive.¹⁷⁰ Hence, intersectionality foregrounds the identities of the Ethiopian eunuch – race, sexuality, class, religion, culture, to name the obvious – as more than the sum of his identities (or differences) and serves as a theoretical tool that considers the simultaneity of different vectors of identities (or differences) as a social process.¹⁷¹ It is in this light that Avtar Brah and Ann Phoenix's definition opines:

We regard the concept of 'intersectionality' as signifying the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axis [sic] of differentiation – economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential – intersect in historically specific contexts. The concept emphasizes that different dimensions of social life cannot be separated out into discrete and pure strands.¹⁷²

This definition works to accommodate the imbricated dimensions of social life as historically interlocking and contextually bound. For the Ethiopian eunuch this

Middle-Classness', *Social Identities* 17.2 (2011): 242.

¹⁷⁰ Adrien, Katherine Wing, 'Brief Reflections toward a Multiplicative Theory and Praxis of Being', *Berkeley Journal of Gender, Law & Justice* 6 (1990): 194.

¹⁷¹ Kimberlé Crenshaw, 'Whose Story Is It Anyway? Feminist and Antiracist Appropriations of Anita Hill', in *Race-ing Justice, En-Gendering Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality*, ed. Toni Morrison (New York: Pantheon, 1992), 403. In light of this, the various intersections of social inequality exacted by the imperial gaze, for example, can amount to a 'matrix of domination', where 'intersecting oppressions' of race, gender, sexuality or nation, for example, "are actually organized. Regardless of the particular intersections involved, structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power reappear across quite different forms of oppression" Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 18. Ritzer refers to intersectionality as the "vectors of oppression and privilege" in George Ritzer, *Contemporary Sociological Theory and Its Classical Roots: The Basics*, 3rd ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2010), 219.

¹⁷² Avtar Brah and Ann Phoenix, 'Ain't I A Woman? Revisiting Intersectionality', *Journal of International Women's Studies* 5.3 (2013): 76. While intersectionality helps with disrupting notions of cumulative identities in that it would focus on conceptualising the force of the Ethiopian eunuch's experience through a nexus or conduit where identities are produced, it does not always take into account the dialectic arrangement between sites of domination and privilege that form the exacting gaze. It focuses on specific intersections, not their context of cohabitation. But different gazes are privileged, repressed and articulated in different ways, depending on context and conditions, historical or otherwise. In other words, the intersectional gaze might best be understood in terms of contingencies, even if these are shifting from one socio-political context to the next whilst foregrounding different vectors of constitutives depending on the interests of the reader's reflection.

would mean that one must take into account the wider historical and political character of the context of such intersectionality. His intersectionality must be conjuncturally characterised.¹⁷³

However, the postcolonial effect of this – especially with respect to the gaze – is to think of the matrix of domination not merely as a composite force exerted upon the Ethiopian eunuch but as a contingently historical and composite force exerted upon and through the oppressive gaze. The gaze does not merely exercise power but is dominated by it. It becomes a subject and instrument of power.¹⁷⁴ It has the power, as we will see, to create a new Ethiopian eunuch with a new body and a new ethnoreligion. Thus, the contribution of intersectionality to this dissertation – in the spirit of postcolonial criticism – will emphasise the necessary vectors of the historical, cultural, psychic and tradition building constitutives of the power of the (disciplinary, canonical) gaze. It will keep in view the inexorably cumulative and efficacious dynamism of these interlocking vectors of constitutives as they come to bear upon the (momentous) gaze of different institutional readerships.¹⁷⁵ Hence, the collective notion of the ‘imperial’.

¹⁷³ Byron’s notion of ‘multiaxial’ comes close to that of intersectionality in Gay L. Byron, ‘Ancient Ethiopia and the New Testament: Ethnic (Con)Texts and Racialized (Sub)Texts’, in *They Were All Together in One Place? Toward Minority Biblical Criticism*, ed. by Randall C. Bailey, Tat-Siong Benny Liew, and Fernando F. Segovia, SemeiaSt 57 (Atlanta: SBL, 2009), 177. However, whether ‘multiaxial’ connotes the notion of systems of interlocking domination is not very clear.

¹⁷⁴ In the Foucauldian sense of the word, “power is exercised upon the dominant [gaze] as well as on the dominated” – Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago, Ill: Chicago University Press, 1983), 186. In which case and consistent with Foucault’s ‘analytics of power’, power creates new opportunities and capacities within the gaze to dominate. Power is self-generative, so to speak. It simultaneously regulates and creates new subjects. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin, 1995), 136–38.

¹⁷⁵ It is helpful to think of the inseparably conjunctural, concentric sites, intersectionally construed as an assemblage, in the vein of Jasbir Puar’s usage, inseparably “attuned to interwoven forces that merge and dissipate time, space, and body against linearity, coherency, and permanency”. Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 212. Puar’s usage of assemblage is adopted from Deleuze and Guattari’s usage. See, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 8. Here, Deleuze and Guattari refers to assemblage as “a multiplicity that

1.3.5 Gender and Sexuality

It is difficult to talk about the identity of the Ethiopian eunuch without referring to its implication for gender and sexuality. These twin tropes are a key conjunctural co-constitutives of postcolonial studies.¹⁷⁶ Feminism, as a template for gender and sexuality, has often been criticised for its universalising, and thereby colonising, tendencies. Chandra Mohanty,¹⁷⁷ Gayatri Spivak,¹⁷⁸ Bapsi Sidhwa,¹⁷⁹ and Neluka Silva¹⁸⁰ have been progenitors of these critiques, where they destabilise the term ‘woman’, arguing for a more nuanced construal within feminism while admitting their inability to recover substantively the marginalised and transhistorical voices of women, given their own now privileged positions. As already alluded to above in discussions around intersectionality, notions of gender and sexuality are virtually inseparable from that of race.¹⁸¹ Invariably

necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections”. Thus, the vectors of identities and differentiations are so historically and psychically mounted that when they intersect their sheer force is inexorable, irresistible and unsurmountable. Strictly speaking, they cannot be disassembled, stabilised then examined. They are always moving, coalescing, dispersing, circling, forming. They are collectively an organic whole due to their fluid interactions.

¹⁷⁶ Chief among key texts for a critique of gender and sexuality through postcolonial lens are: McClintock, *Imperial Leather; Woman-Nation-State*, eds. Nira Yuval-Davies and Floya Anthias (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989); and Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). Stoler, studying ethnographically the Dutch West Indies, states further that sexuality often served as a polyvalent, discursive proxy for power relations in that it was “more than convenient metaphor for colonial domination. It was a fundamental class and racial marker implicated in a wider set of relations of power,” (44–5). For an introduction to the complexities of the topic, see Young, *Colonial Desire*.

¹⁷⁷ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, ‘Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses’, *Boundary 2*, 12/13 (1984): 333–58.

¹⁷⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism’, *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1985): 243–261.

¹⁷⁹ Bapsi Sidhwa, *Cracking India: A Novel* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Milkweed Editions, 1991).

¹⁸⁰ Neluka Silva, *The Gendered Nation: Contemporary Writings from South Asia* (New Delhi; Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2004). See in particular the Introduction.

¹⁸¹ For an excellent example of how this intersectionality is applied to Jesus studies see Denise Kimber Buell *et al.*, ‘Introduction: Cultural Complexity and Intersectionality in the Study of the Jesus Movement.’, *BibInt* 18 (2010): 309–312.

then, the postcolonial impetus of this study has to be informed by gender and sexuality discussions through the rubric of intersectionality.

It is axiomatically the case that gender and sexuality are endogenous themes in the Ethiopian eunuch story, as particularly denoted by the socio-political identity appellative, eunuch. As a eunuch he apparently transgresses delimited, traditional spaces of gender and sexuality. He occupies the in-between, liminal interstices of gender and sexuality. These themes have been variously interrogated by a number of biblical scholars. Prominent among them is Sean Burke, who in his seminal monograph, *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch: Strategies of Ambiguity in Acts*, argues quite persuasively that the eunuch is positioned by Luke as occupying an interstitial, liminal and ambiguous religio-political space of hybridity.¹⁸² Burke's text follows a body of work that focuses on the ethical implications of the eunuch's sexual hybridity as transgressing fixed sexual binaries and boundaries in Luke's vision of a new inclusivity.¹⁸³

While there is no denying the powerful symbolism that Luke's Ethiopian eunuch evokes, intersectionality enables us to identify the exacting interests of the gaze. *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch* privileges a Graeco-Roman optic for construing his eunuchic identity – an optic which I demonstrate is not only historically problematic, but devoid of intersectionality. There I suggest that Sanjay

¹⁸² Burke, *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch*. Burke's use of queer theory, as stemming from the impulse of postmodern theory, challenges notions of the totalisational, the natural, the general and universal premising of truth claims (pp. 15–16).

¹⁸³ Kartzow and Moxnes, 'Complex Identities'; Kathryn M. Ringrose, *The Perfect Servant: Eunuchs and the Social Construction of Gender in Byzantium* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 111–27; Brittany E. Wilson, *Unmanly Men*, 113–52; Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, *Destabilizing the Margins: An Intersectional Approach to Early Christian Memory* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 46–58; Zeichmann, 'Gender Minorities In and Under Roman Power', 61–73; Joseph A. Marchal, 'Who Are You Calling a Eunuch?! Staging Conversations and Connections between Feminist and Queer Biblical Studies and Intersex Advocacy', in *Intersex, Theology, and the Bible: Troubling Bodies in Church, Text, and Society*, ed. by Susannah Cornwall (New York; Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 29–54.

Subrahmanyam's notion of 'connected histories',¹⁸⁴ as a constitutive of 'critical conviviality, but within the context of inculturation hermeneutics'¹⁸⁵ where we look to other histories connected to the Afroasiatic strip of eunuchs nearer the archetype of the Ethiopian eunuch, might help with elucidating other possibilities for his eunuch identity and signification. However, the concept of 'connected histories' is not merely looking at adding new, 'other' histories to the main narrative, but asking, why were the 'connected histories' ignored or sidelined in the first place? This not only problematises the traditional rendering of the main narratives but potentially centres the 'connected histories' intersectionally and thereby transforms the reading.

1.3.6 Race and Class

Another couple of major conjunctural constitutives of postcolonial criticism that are indispensably linked to the personhood of the Ethiopian eunuch are race and class, not least because he is black, an aristocrat and wealthy. (The Ethiopian eunuch as δυνάστης is also a class identity marker.) To begin with the former, using the term 'race' to locate him is not, however, unproblematic. It is often conflated with 'ethnicity' and consequently used interchangeably.¹⁸⁶ Yet, given that race is putatively a biological marker notably and essentially of skin, bone and hair, many acknowledge the tendency for the generalisation of ethnicity as a

¹⁸⁴ The notion of 'connected histories' was first mooted in Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia', *Modern Asian Studies* 31.03 (1997): 735–62, and later developed in Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History: Mughals and Franks* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press India, 2005).

¹⁸⁵ John Riches, 'Cultural Bias in European and North American Biblical Scholarship', in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. by Mark Brett (Boston: Brill, 2002), 431–48. Riches identifies the value of reading the text from one's cultural bias and point of view. In essence, this is inescapable. However, it can be acknowledged that the African cultures and worldview is probably closer to the world of the biblical text than that of a Eurocentric worldview. In which case, the plausibility of an Afrocentric inculturation hermeneutic might not go amiss. See further, Gosnell L. Yorke, 'Biblical Hermeneutics: An Afrocentric Perspective', *R&T* 2.2 (1995): 145–158.

¹⁸⁶ Stephen Spencer, *Race and Ethnicity: Culture, Identity and Representation* (London; New York: Routledge, 2014), 59. Gay L. Byron, 'Race, Ethnicity, and the Bible: Pedagogical Challenges and Curricular Opportunities: Race, Ethnicity, and the Bible', *Teaching Theology & Religion* 15.2 (2012): 105–124.

more accurate expression of difference predicated on culture rather than phenotype¹⁸⁷ or even genotype for that matter.¹⁸⁸ It is an antiessentialist term, because it is constituted differently at different times and places.¹⁸⁹

The notion of race as a classification, however, is peculiarly a European modern discursive invention¹⁹⁰ propelled by scientific justification, and impelled by biblical race thinking.¹⁹¹ And even though there is generally critical consensus

¹⁸⁷ Stephen Harris, *Race and Ethnicity in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 1, 8.

¹⁸⁸ Love L. Sechrest, 'Race, Ethnicity, and Biblical Criticism', ed. by Steven L. McKenzie, *Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). Significantly, culture is sometimes but problematically linked to genotype. See Charles W. Mills, *Blackness Visible*, 46, 52.

¹⁸⁹ Stuart Hall, 'New Ethnicities', in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, eds. Kuan-Hsing Chen and David Morley (London; New York: Routledge, 1996 [1988]), 447.

¹⁹⁰ Cornel West, *Prophesy Deliverance! Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1999). First published in 1982, West traces the structure and genealogical topos of race thinking – the persistent reinventions and deployment of power structures in the discourse – through the modernist discourse on race in its generation of the idea of white supremacy. He is consumed by the question, if I may paraphrase, "what dynamism in the modern discourse was it that suppressed the very idea of racial equality?" (p. 17). His more popular classic of 1993, Cornel West, *Race Matters* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), demonstrates how 'prophetic pragmatism', a conjunction of Marxism, pragmatism and the Hebrew prophetic voice, can speak to the American catastrophic disease of racism.

¹⁹¹ There are a number of texts that speak to the notion of the bible being strategically instrumentalised by fifteenth to seventeenth century Christianity as the progenitor of the construct of race as a composite category, divisible along hierarchical lines. See J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (London; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), where Carter attributes race to a theological category, which like supersessionism, Marcionism, Gnosticism, adoptionism and Nestorianism it is predicated on a misreading of the Trinity, even by the likes of Kant; Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2010), where Jennings locates the source of racial hierarchy to Christian theology's tendency to eschew the notion of Jesus as coming in Jewish flesh and to refuse to live its life through Jewishness – this has much to do with the *Judenfrage* (the Jewish question) in terms of how do we construct a universal humanness independent of and over against the Jewish covenant of promise?; Brian Bantum, *The Death of Race: Building a New Christianity in a Racial World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2016) and Brian Bantum, *Redeeming Mulatto: A Theology of Race and Christian Hybridity* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016) – both of which texts challenge modern concepts of race – the former text focuses on how Christianity was complicit with modernity's European expansion in being the body through which race was ontologically constructed, and the latter tenders the human-divine mulatto being of Jesus as the Christocentric answer to a mixed-race world of hybridised people; Michael F. Robinson, *The Lost White Tribe: Explorers, Scientists, and the Theory That Changed a Continent* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2016). Robinson highlights a number of white origins narratives in Africa spawned by the biblical story of origins both in the creation (Gen. 1 & 2) and the Hamitic curse (9:18-27). Incidentally, Carter and James are viewed as premiers of a new generation of "new black theologians" in USA – Brian Bantum is the other – who pin the modern problem of race and theology to the historical emergence of supersessionism among the early Church Fathers in an attempt "to move theology beyond racialisation", Karen Teel, 'The "New Black Theology" and the Dream of Post-Racialization', *BT* 15.1 (2017): 3. Teel, in fact, offers a critique of the goal of post-racialisation, which she feels is unattainable without the energy of

that it is socially and politically constructed¹⁹² with synecdochical, mythical ramifications,¹⁹³ because of its violent association with the subjugation of the ethnic other – enslavement, conquest, colonialism – it is difficult to conceive of it surviving a pejorative utility.¹⁹⁴ In light of this, since successive readings of the subjectivity of the Ethiopian eunuch have hardly been done without accounting for his ethnicity as racial identity the category of race has to be treated seriously.

Although race is a modern construct, it is still notably the (etic)¹⁹⁵ appellative ascribed to people from different ethnic backgrounds and the most common ascription attributed today. It presumes, in the words of Manning Marable:

An unequal relationship between social aggregates, characterized by dominant and subordinate forms of social interaction, and

the antiracism of the “old theologians” such as James Cone, M. Shawn Copeland and Emilie M. Townes. Although not framed in this way, Teel’s piece could be further nuanced in terms of the ‘politics of identity’ school (new) verses the ‘identity politics’ school (old) or ‘anti-essentialism’ verses ‘essentialism’. In this way, her point about the indispensability of the antiracist approach could be construed in terms of Spivakian strategic essentialism.

¹⁹² For a recent study on the different registers of race as a social and political construct see Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe and others, ‘A Qualitative Analysis of How Anthropologists Interpret the Race Construct’, *American Anthropologist* 119.3 (2017): 422–434.

¹⁹³ The notion of race as synecdochical in its discursive operations is to suggest that it, in the words of Lee Edelman, “can be read as the master trope of racism that gets deployed in variety of different ways to reinforce the totalizing logic of identity”, in Lee Edelman, “The Part for the (W)hole: Baldwin, Homophobia, and the Fantasmatics of “Race””, in *Homographesis: Essays in Gay Literary and Cultural Theory* (London; New York: Routledge, 2013), 44. For example race may operate synecdochically in terms of biology, where ‘white’ means a white person when in fact the person can never be ‘properly white’ in actual terms. Yet the fictional and mythical, yet totalising logic of ‘white’ creates a binarism and hierarchy of race with white supremacy at the top.

¹⁹⁴ M. F. Ashley Montagu, *Man’s Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), 154. Montagu was one of the first to signal political bias in the utility of race as a category by deconstructing its social construction. It is arguably the case because of the pejorative utility of the term ‘race’ that some biblical scholars have shied away from its use altogether. E.g., Calvin Roetzel, ‘No “Race of Israel” in Paul’, in *Putting Body and Soul Together: Essays in Honor of Robin Scroggs*, ed. by Virginia Wiles, Alexandra Brown, and Graydon F. Snyder (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 230–44. Philip Francis Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul’s Letter* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 40, 55. In fact, it is safe to say that the desire to conquer, enslave and colonisation was a mythical ambition and epochal moment for race making. Indeed, conquest, enslavement and colonisation are technologies for producing the racialised product. Hence, a racialised optic will always be inscribed by violence, whether epistemic or material. Race then is indissolubly linked with issues of power.

¹⁹⁵ Harris, ‘History and Significance of the Emic/Etic Distinction’.

reinforced by the intricate patterns of public discourse, power ownership and privilege within the economic, social and political institutions of society.¹⁹⁶

As a result, the socio-political context of successive readerships of the past five hundred years have predisposed the interpreter to comprehend literary figures in racialised categories, particularly the Ethiopian eunuch. Since the gaze of the mainly white, modernist interpreter is filtered in racial terms, it would obfuscate meaning if one were to use the milder and socially contingent 'ethnicity'. It is then perhaps plausibly expedient to use it as a general etic denotation of substantive analytical value.¹⁹⁷

Race is marked both physically and culturally. In fact, the former is often a marker for the latter.¹⁹⁸ This is why race is a pre-eminently a mythical construct, socially constructed because the latter decides which features of the former matter in determining racial groups. Since it controls conceptuality, producing effectively a racialised discourse within the academy, race in its different representations will have to be engaged with in those terms.¹⁹⁹ This is effectively

¹⁹⁶ Manning Marable, *Beyond Black and White: Transforming African-American Politics*, 2nd ed. (London; New York: Verso, 2009), 186.

¹⁹⁷ David Nirenberg ably makes this point by suggesting that if one were to eliminate equivocal words such as racism from the discourse one would "lose purchase on the language of their subjects". See David Nirenberg, 'Was There Race before Modernity?', in *The Origins of Racism in the West*, ed. by Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 234. Cf. Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), 247: "'Race' must be retained as an analytic category ... because it refers investigation to the power that collective identities acquire by means of their roots in tradition".

¹⁹⁸ Stuart Hall, 'Conclusion: The Multi-Cultural Question', in *Un/settled Multiculturalisms: Diasporas, Entanglements, Transruptions*, ed. Barnor Hesse (London; New York: Zed Books, 2000), 223. After making the point that the process of differentiation between biological and cultural markers are not made as two different systems of race and ethnicity respectively within discourse, but are in fact produced as "racism's two registers," Hall remarks: "Biological racism privileges markers like skin colour, but those signifiers have always also been used, by discursive extension, to connote social and cultural differences . . . The biological referent is therefore never wholly absent from discourses of ethnicity, though it is more indirect. The more 'ethnicity' matters, the more its characteristics are represented as relatively fixed, inherent within a group, transmitted from generation to generation, not just by culture and education, but by biological inheritance, stabilized above all by kinship and endogamous marriage rules that ensure that the ethnic group remains genetically, and therefore culturally 'pure'."

¹⁹⁹ Wendy D. Roth, 'The Multiple Dimensions of Race', *ERS* 39.8 (2016): 1310–1038. This study shows that

the conclusion that Denise Kimber Buell comes to when discussing race and ethnicity in her monograph, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity*.²⁰⁰ “Ethnic reasoning”, for Buell:

Refers to the modes of persuasion that ... early Christians used ... to legitimize various forms of Christianness as the universal, most authentic manifestation of humanity, and it offered Christians both a way to define themselves relative to ‘outsiders’ and to compete with other ‘insiders’ to assert the superiority of their varying visions of Christianness.²⁰¹

This “ethnic reasoning” serves as an early primer for race thinking, since race thinking itself is a more recent, modernist iteration of the ancient modality of ethnic reasoning.²⁰² The focus of race thinking is on the processing of a developed racial reasoning instrumental to the idealisation of whiteness. Ethnic reasoning is an earlier embryonic and more nuanced term that anticipates a fuller idealisation. Hence, it will be employed when analysing the Patristic writings.

In fact, commenting on her methodological strategy of ‘ethnic reasoning’ – perhaps a former incarnation of ‘race thinking’²⁰³ – she later stated:

different representations or dimensions of race – racial identity, self-classification, observed race, reflected race, phenotype, and racial ancestry – impact inequality differently. Racial fluidity and boundaries intersect differently with the different dimensions.

²⁰⁰ Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2005). Buell’s ethnic reasoning is similar to Byron’s ‘ethnic othering’ in her taxonomy of ethnopitical rhetorics. See Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference*, 1–2. Earlier examples of ethnocritical studies are Jonathan M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) and Tessa Rajak, ‘The Location of Cultures in Second Temple Palestine: The Evidence of Josephus’, in *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting*, ed. Richard Bauckham, *BAFCS* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 4:1–14.

²⁰¹ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 2. For an example of how ethnic reasoning is used in the study of Acts of the Apostles, see Eric D. Barreto, *Ethnic Negotiations: The Function of Race and Ethnicity in Acts 16*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

²⁰² Hannah Arendt, ‘Race-Thinking before Racism’, *The Review of Politics* 6.1 (1944): 36–73. Incidentally, Arendt argues here that race thinking, like many other ideologies, started off as an opinion around which public assent was garnered before sedimenting in the political ideology of racism.

²⁰³ The taproot of the genealogy of this race thinking is born out of an idealisation of whiteness where the modern white man is anachronistically projected as the progenitor of both Christianity – biologically and

There, I used ‘race’ deliberately to trouble the sense that we automatically shut off contemporary presuppositions when considering temporally and culturally distant discussions of human difference and to sharpen the possibility that texts produced in different languages and contexts might nonetheless be resources for the production of modern materializations of ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’.²⁰⁴

This, as a stratagem of discursive disruption, is one with which I concur. Race is not a fixed, immutable identity. It is a process. Therefore, any racialised conceptuality has to be partial, fragmentary and contradictory, since it is contingent on the complexity of the reader’s context. It is in this sense that Maghan Keita’s projection of modern epistemology as racial epistemology must be construed.²⁰⁵

The topic of race is never far from class. This is indeed the case for the Ethiopian eunuch, who is a ‘black African’ of aristocratic class. Yet, class has a different genealogical trajectory in Europe than Northern America. In very general terms, class in Europe, for example in UK, is not merely tied to wealth but

politically – and, the much later, Judaism. Of Christianity, because whether one posits Cornelius or the Ethiopian eunuch as the first Gentile convert, the White man is still the progenitor of Christianity; of later Judaism, because whiteness had become the benchmark of acceptability, integrity and normativity for late modern Jews. See Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Race in America* (New Brunswick, NJ; London: Rutgers University Press, 1998). Although Jonathan Schorsch argues that the Jewish attempt to align its identity with whiteness began in the aftermath of their expulsion from the Catholic Iberian Peninsula in 1492 in the anti-Blackness rhetoric of their hegemonic discourse against Africans. See, Jonathan Schorsch, *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

²⁰⁴ Buell, ‘God’s Own People’, 164.

²⁰⁵ Maghan Keita, *Race and the Writing of History: Riddling the Sphinx* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). Keita argues that the historiographical choice to predicate western civilisation on classical Greece civilisation while denying the wholistic connectivity of Egypt’s with the rest of Africa’s civilisation is disingenuous. This is ironic given that classical Greece built its own historiographical identity on African civilisation: “If we think that history is a device used by people to tell us who they are, what they thought themselves to be, and what is important in their lives, then what the Greeks left suffices. By analysis and interpretation, what the Greeks left also tells us that they felt the Egyptians to be extremely important and believed that those same Egyptians had intimate cultural and physical relations with other parts of Africa— particularly ‘Ethiopia’. The Greeks believed that these relations affected not only Egyptian civilization but Greek civilization as well. This is not a question of negative or positive influence, but a question of the power of being” (pp. 39-40).

predominately to blood, social pedigree and proximity to the royal throne as in the 'Establishment'.²⁰⁶ Whereas, class in USA, for example, is generally tied predominately to wealth and income.²⁰⁷ However, since people of colour in both settings, particularly black people, are generally the lowest of both social and economic classes because of ties to enslavement and colonialism, notions of race and class are so deeply enmeshed and embedded in epistemology and ontology that their conceptualisation is inseparable. Thus, the politics of class. To speak of race and class in modernity is to speak to different sides of the same political coin as both are indubitably inflected by the other as we will discover with the Ethiopian eunuch.²⁰⁸

In addition to class (and religion, for that matter),²⁰⁹ the topic of race is never far from that of culture or multiculturalism. That the world of the New Testament was a multicultural one is almost a given – and by multicultural, I mean the free mingling of peoples as a lived experience, not a managed one.²¹⁰ In which case, to use the distinction of Gilroy, their relations were governed not by

²⁰⁶ For a problematisation of class in UK, see Hall's signal essay of the late 1950s – Stuart Hall, 'A Sense of Classlessness', *Universities and Left Review* 1.5 (1958): 26–32. Cf. Edward Palmer Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 1963).

²⁰⁷ For a problematisation of class in USA, see Nancy Isenberg, *White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America* (New York: Viking, 2016), who argues that land (property), breeding (pedigree) and wealth define class in USA, as borrowed from UK.

²⁰⁸ Stuart Hall and others, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 327–98. Here, Hall cites his famous quote, "Race is the modality in which class is lived" (p. 394).

²⁰⁹ It is the mutability of race or ethnicity that renders it sometimes indistinguishable from religion, especially in antiquity. As noted in the Introduction, modern conceptions of race and religion view them in separate discreet spheres, where one can exist without the other. However, in antiquity this was not so. Ethnicity and religion were indissolubly one. Hence, the adoption of the term 'ethnoreligious' as a descriptor of one belonging to a people as well as a religion bounded by sacred 'scripts' of orality, practices or texts. I will return to this point in chapter 3 where notions of *ἔθνος* are discussed in greater detail.

²¹⁰ The modern concept of multiculturalism is one that is managed or policed by laws and policies. In the pre-nation era of antiquity multiculturalism was a lived experience of free movements irrespective of disagreements and dissent. See Kenan Malik, *The Meaning of Race: Race, History and Culture in Western Society* (New York: NYU Press, 1996) for a discussion on the inconsistencies of the modern concept of multiculturalism.

multiculturalism but by multiculture. Gospel, Pauline and Acts studies have attested to this free mingling.²¹¹ This context is critical to the convivial agency with which the Ethiopian eunuch could be conceptualised in light of his proposed pilgrimage.²¹² Although he was not necessarily for Luke colonised literarily, historically, politically or otherwise, I will demonstrate that for later readerships he was undeniably and ethnoreligiously colonised, possibly beginning with Luke's immediate readers.

So why is the Ethiopian eunuch not Jewish? Is it because he is black? Then are Jews white in the modern sense of the word?²¹³ This kind of racial reasoning

²¹¹ Brad R. Braxton, 'Paul and Racial Reconciliation: A Postcolonial Approach to 2 Corinthians 3:12-18', in *Scripture and Traditions: Essays on Early Judaism and Christianity in Honor of Carl R. Holladay*, eds. Patrick Gray and Gail R. O'Day, NovTSup 129 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008), 411–28; Brad R. Braxton, 'The Role of Ethnicity in the Social Location of 1 Corinthians 7:17-24', in *Yet with a Steady Beat: Contemporary U.S. Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Randall C. Bailey, SemeiaSt 42 (Atlanta: SBL, 2002), 19–32; Charles H. Cosgrove, 'Did Paul Value Ethnicity?', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 68 (2006): 268–290; Dennis C Dulling, '2 Corinthians 11:22: Historical Context, Rhetoric, and Ethnic Identity', in *The New Testament and Early Christian Literature in Greco-Roman Context: Studies in Honor of David E. Aune*, ed. John Fotopoulos, 122 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012), 65–90; Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Jae Won Lee, 'Paul and Ethnic Difference in Romans', in *They Were All Together in One Place? Toward Minority Biblical Criticism*, eds. Randall C. Bailey, Tat-Siong Benny Liew, and Fernando F. Segovia, SemeiaSt 65 (Atlanta: SBL, 2009), 141–59; Joseph A. Marchal, 'Mimicry and Colonial Differences: Gender, Ethnicity, and Empire in the Interpretation of Pauline Imitation', in *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings: Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christianity*, eds. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Laura Nasrallah (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 101–27.

²¹² For a development of Gilroy's concept of conviviality see Gilroy, *After Empire*. This concept will be discussed in greater detail later.

²¹³ There is an ongoing debate about contemporary Jewishness and whiteness. For example, see Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks*; Jonathan Schorsch, *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World*; Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006); David Schraub, 'White Jews: An Intersectional Approach,' *AJS Rev.* (2019): 1–29; Lewis R. Gordon, 'Rarely Kosher: Studying Jews of Color in North America', *American Jewish History* 100.1 (2016): 105–16. Shlomo Sand is controversial in his popular text, Shlomo Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People* (London; New York: Verso, 2009). Following Arthur Koestler – Arthur Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe: The Khazar Empire and Its Heritage* (Last Century Media, 1976) – Sand suggests that postbiblical Jewishness (even biblical Jewishness, to some extent) is an invention given that what we have today is the consequence of a number of mass conversions to Judaism since the fifth century. For a refutation of the Khazar conversion theory, see Michael Toch, *The Economic History of European Jews: Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2012). For a reflection on the struggle within Judaism for European identity, see Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, 'Orientalism, Jewish Studies and Israeli Society: A Few Comments', *Philological Encounters* 2.3–4 (2017): 237–69. For attempts to research the construction of Jewishness and race in early modernity to the present, see Tudor Parfitt, *Black Jews in Africa and the Americas* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2013). Here, Parfitt argues that the emergent propensity within

amounts to a “racial epidermal schema”,²¹⁴ to adapt Fanon’s term, or epidermalization, to use Bhabha’s phrase quoted in the Forward of Fanon’s book:²¹⁵ namely, the thought that essential identity is found on the surface of the Ethiopian eunuch’s skin. Is there a power attributed to the pigmentation that is denied the white man, which consumes the gaze and can only be overcome by erasure?²¹⁶ His skin colour is prohibitive.

The biological nature of this idealisation is a focus on whiteness as identity, while the political nature is a focus on whiteness as an episteme. The combined effect serves only to alienate the African’s sense of self where he can never be equal with either his Jewish relatives or European Christian counterparts. Reading race in light of whiteness could enable one to see that the Ethiopian eunuch is disembodied, sterilised, neutered. This is because the nonraced norm,²¹⁷

scholarship to construct a Hebrew and or Judaistic identity in African groups – a process he calls Judaisation – stems from western imagination, a continuum in which African American churches and scholarship are part of, as opposed to formative to. See also Tudor Parfitt, ‘The Construction of Jewish Identities in Africa’, in *The Jews of Ethiopia: The Birth of an Elite*, ed. by Tudor Parfitt and Emanuela Trevisan Semi (Oxford; New York: Routledge, 2010), 1–42. Parfitt uses the term ‘Falashas’ for ‘Beta Israel’. For a study in Jewish priestly lineage and race through the critical lens of genetics, see David B. Goldstein, *Jacob’s Legacy: A Genetic View of Jewish History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009). For research into the construction of race in classical antiquity, using Jews as a case study, see the seminal text, Benjamin Isaac, *Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

²¹⁴ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 84.

²¹⁵ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, viii.

²¹⁶ Commenting on Bhabha, Huddart avers, “this in practice prevents recognition and solidarity, and disrupts the coherence of that essential identity’s narrative” – David Huddart, *Homi K. Bhabha*, Routledge Critical Thinkers (Oxford; New York: Routledge, 2006), 29. The corollary is, the Ethiopian eunuch cannot have any continuity say with the later discovered fourth century Aksumite, Beta Israel (Ethiopian Jews) identity, because it would account for there being a black Jewish diaspora during the first century CE. Here the asymmetrical relationship between the Ethiopian eunuch’s identity and later interpretative identity is predicated not merely on class, in the Marxist sense of the word, but on race (and even gender). Hence, a different discourse emerges.

²¹⁷ See Charles Mills’s chapter, “White Right: The Idea of a *Herrenvolk* Ethics”, in Mills, *Blackness Visible*, 155, which was presented at the University of Western Ontario Philosophy Department’s 1995 conference. Richard Dyer develops this thought in his book, Richard Dyer, *White* (London; New York: Routledge, 1997). See in particular his first chapter, pp. 1–40, where whites are positioned as “human but not raced”, (p. 4).

structured invisibility,²¹⁸ or colour-blind hermeneutic, of which whiteness is²¹⁹ – where the Ethiopian eunuch’s blackness is purged and rendered redundant – can serve only to universalise an essentialist reading that would deny the Ethiopian eunuch a theological and religious ontology and deprive the academy of a critical contribution.

Put another way, the philosophical gaze of whiteness, which inhabits the academy (white, middle class, heterosexual, protestant male), obfuscates the racial and political identity of the Ethiopian, signifying that race does not matter, when in fact the marker in the text of the imperial reader (Acts 8.27) demonstrates that race, ethnoreligiosity, sexuality and the Empire of Ethiopia do matter. It is as if the Bultmannian ‘philosophy’ of the academy wants to ignore politely any knowledge of that historical, conjunctural moment. “So the moment of philosophical universalisation,” to quote Bhabha, “passes over the moment of epidermalization, in which the white gaze fixes the [identity of the] black”.²²⁰ If this is the case, this kind of institutionally racist reading, which also circumscribes possibilities for religious inclusion since in antiquity the two worked as one, must be resisted at all cost.

1.3.7 Euromodernity and the West

The third set of conjunctural constitutives to be examined in light of the impulse of postcolonial criticism are Euromodernity and the West. Since these shape our

²¹⁸ Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (London: Routledge, 1993), 6.

²¹⁹ Katherine Tyler, *Whiteness, Class and the Legacies of Empire: On Home Ground* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 14–16, 107.

²²⁰ Huddart, *Bhabha*, 30. See Fanon’s quote: “I move slowly in the world, accustomed now to seek no longer for upheaval. I progress by crawling. And already I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. I am fixed. Having adjusted their microtomes, they objectively cut away slices of my reality. I am laid bare. I feel, I see in those white faces that it is not a new man who has come in, but a new kind of man, a new genus. Why, it’s a Negro!” Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 116. Fanon’s identity is a blackness produced by whiteness. It is a blackness that is fixed yet depleted.

historical context and dominate a cultural way of thinking even within the guild, it is useful to define them reflectively but critically. Part of the process of the subjugation of the Ethiopian eunuch by successive readerships is, I will argue, the way he has been held captive to the modernisation project of the ‘civilising West’. In this section, my preferential term of ‘Euromodernity’ (over ‘modernity’) will be accounted for, including its structural links with Graeco-Roman exceptionalism. This is helpful in drawing a similar comparison later in section 2.2 between ‘proto-whiteness’ and the *Adversus Judaeos* trope of late antiquity. These parallel relationships are critical to the work of marginalising or erasing the probable ethnoreligious agency of the Ethiopian eunuch. To begin, a brief discussion on the relatively recent developmental currents in ‘modernity’ along geopolitical and conceptual lines will follow to account for my usage of the term, ‘Euromodernity’.

The Peruvian writer, Aníbal Quijano, first aligned the narrative of modernity with notions of coloniality when he argued that the early conquest of the Americas 500 years ago articulated power with knowledge.²²¹ Hence, the coloniality of power was equated with the coloniality of knowledge as a product of rationality expressed through political and economic operations and articulated as modernity.²²²

²²¹ Aníbal Quijano, ‘Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality’, *Cultural Studies*, 21 (2007): 168–78. Originally published in the late 1980s and early 1990s as ‘Colonialidad y modernidad-racionalidad’ in *Los Conquistados: 1492 y la población indígena de las Américas*, ed. Heraclio Bonilla (Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia: Quito, Ecuador: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1992), which was first published in English as Aníbal Quijano, ‘Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality’, in *Globalizations and Modernities: Experiences and Perspectives of European and Latin America*, ed. Göran Therborn, Lise-Lotte Wallenius, and Jan Teeland (Stockholm: Forskningsrådsnämnden, 1999), 41–51. For a reflection on the precedence of Quijano’s work see Walter D. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America* (Malden, MA; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005), 5, 45–47.

²²² The intensification of this emerging narrative of modernity could be defined as having a significant beginning and location. The temporal rupture was occasioned by the birth of the Industrial Revolution, which saw off an agrarian past and ushered in an industrial present. The spatial yet cultural rupture took place in the North Atlantic attended by movements towards democratisation – the narrative would not say black Atlantic – which separated the world, according to Gurminder Bhambra, into the civilised West, constituted as Europe, and the uncivilised Rest. – Gurminder K Bhambra, ‘Sociology and Postcolonialism: Another “Missing” Revolution?’, *Sociology*, 41 (2007): 871–884 (877). Both these sites – temporal and spatial – were justified by the Enlightenment, which itself privileged scientific reasoning as the measure of progress

Said's demonstration of how literary actors originating from the global South have been systematically orientalist by their nineteenth and twentieth century authors is a case in point.²²³ However, Keita pushes Said further by suggesting that his work on orientalism is not only related to the Afrocentric critique but that "the Egyptian as African became 'oriental'" during the twin emergence of Egyptology and the orientalism discourse.²²⁴ Thus, for her the project of modernity is both an epistemological and historiographical mission.

Gurminder Bhambra, on the other hand, examines the discursive formation of sociology in a way that is helpful to my use of the term 'Euromodernity'. Modernity – this is the term that Bhambra insists on using – as *sui generis* an "endogenous 'European' project", is identified as the foundational concept of sociology, which as a discipline emerged as a form of reflection on the changes that affected the emergence of the modern world; it became a discipline of the modern in its reflection on the modern.²²⁵ (I argue that the Ethiopian eunuch has also been caught in this crossfire within the biblical studies discourse.)

Bhambra instantiates Subrahmanyam's notion of 'connected histories' to challenge and counteract the overwhelmingly hegemonic force of modernity, insisting that the narratives of the rest of the world have to be engaged with

and the acquisition of truth.

²²³ Said, *Orientalism*, 2.

²²⁴ Keita, *Race and the Writing of History*, 154.

²²⁵ Gurminder K Bhambra, *Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 33 – her quotes included. Conscious of the need to resist homogenising the West as Europe, Bhambra argues that Europe is, however, given this agency in part because if people continue to claim for the European miracle – that Europe is the origin of everything that happens within 'modernity' – then those forms need to be engaged with as Europe (p. 70). Here, Bhambra invokes Max Weber's idea of the 'Rise of the West', and Eric Jones', 'the European miracle'. Cf. Max Weber, *Methodology of Social Sciences*, and Eric Jones, *The European Miracle: Environments, Economies and Geopolitics in the History of Europe and Asia*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

seriously as having originary moments.²²⁶ In a similar way, I submit that ‘connected histories’ fit as a constitutive of the ‘critical conviviality’ optic, especially when used in its broader sense within late Jewish antiquity – a point which I will develop later in section 1.7.

However, as Lewis Gordon wrote, “Blacks ... are indigenous to the world to which they do not belong; they are, in a word, ‘bastards’ of Euromodernity”.²²⁷ Like Gordon, I would retain the term Euromodernity, not in the sense that it is one modernity among many – ‘multiple modernities’ – but because it connotes more than a geo-historical reality. It incarnates any sense of “belonging, continuation, and selfhood”²²⁸ in the form of the European norm. By its prefix ‘Euro’, it exacts and foregrounds the twin epistemological hegemony of its Cartesian gaze and Eurocentrism, and bears allusions for whiteness as an

²²⁶ Bhabra, *Rethinking Modernity*, 15. There are other attempts at rereading or reconstituting history. ‘Multiple modernities’ as an alternative theory for contesting modernity is shown by Bhabra to be inadequate, even though it demonstrates dynamism in other cultures (pp. 871–81). Its culpability is that it holds that those cultures could not come to full modernity except through the interventions of (what was now) Europe on those cultures, thereby maintaining the supremacy of Europe in the discourse. Bhabra further critiques in the same vein two other positions that seek to decentre Eurocentric modernity. (1) The neo-Weberian comparative histories, which critiques ‘modernity’ by demonstrating that other places compared well with European developments. At a stretch, Hans-Georg Gadamer portrays this line of reasoning when he suggests studying other histories beyond the gamut of European rootedness in Greek civilisation. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, ‘The Hermeneutics of Suspicion’, in *Hermeneutics: Questions and Prospects*, ed. Gary Shapiro and Alan Sica (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 54–65: 56–7. It seems that the kind of comparative histories he posits is spurred by the influence of the nineteenth century Romantics who sought beyond the classics “to discover the charm of the past, the far, the alien: the Middle Ages, India, China, and so on.” In light of this, “hermeneutics may be defined as the attempt to overcome this distance in areas where empathy was hard and agreement not easily reached”, (pp. 56–57). Yet, it seems that Gadamer construes this as being plausibly done within the strict circumscription of the Eurocentric gaze since he does not consider at all the agency of the ‘Other’, that they might have an originary point of view. (2) The cultural turn of historicising particular identities through examining discourses, representation and the politicisation of knowledge production. Gurinder K Bhabra, ‘Historical Sociology, International Relations and Connected Histories’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 23 (2010): 127–143. Bhabra locates the three theoretical objects of her critique within the post-war ‘second wave’ historical sociology, which developed along a Marxist axis of reference. These positions, however, maintain the notion of Europe as the ‘ideal type’ – the standard reference or archetype against which all other developments are compared.

²²⁷ Lewis R. Gordon, ‘Franz Boas in Africana Philosophy’, in *Indigenous Visions: Rediscovering the World of Franz Boas*, ed. by Ned Blackhawk and Isaiah Lorado Wilner (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2018), 43.

²²⁸ Gordon, ‘Black Aesthetics, Black Value’, 20.

episteme.²²⁹ On the other hand, ‘modernity’ will be used in its emphasis on the historical era that was materially constituted by enslavement and colonialism.

The analytic, ‘connected histories’, raises questions such as: is the Euromodernist discourse of the Ethiopian eunuch subject to the Euromodernisation narrative that accounts for the European miracle?²³⁰ In other words, is the Ethiopian eunuch displayed as being civilised into full (Euro)modernity through being presented as the first converted Gentile? Has the impetus of Euromodernity ‘othered’ the Ethiopian eunuch to the extent that he is disabled from sourcing any originating moment in the origins of Christianity?

It could be argued that Europe’s reification as the ideal type rests on the notion of its civilisation discourse anchored on the antecedence of Greek civilisation *ex nihilo*. And although a few, like Nietzsche, demurred from this classical imagination, many nineteenth and twentieth century enlighteners sought to substantialise and reify this view.²³¹ This paved the way for modern scholars to

²²⁹ For examples of twinning the Euromodernity discourse with whiteness, see Cynthia Levine-Rasky, ‘Introduction’, in *Working through Whiteness: International Perspectives*, ed. by Cynthia Levine-Rasky, SUNY Series, Interruptions: Border Testimony(ies) and Critical Discourse/S (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 1–24; and, Alastair Bonnett, ‘A White World? Whiteness and the Meaning of Modernity in Latin America and Japan’, in *Working through Whiteness: International Perspectives*, ed. by Cynthia Levine-Rasky, SUNY Series, Interruptions: Border Testimony(ies) and Critical Discourse/s (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 69–106.

²³⁰ See Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*. For an example of a defence of the neo-Weberian European miracle see Michael Mann, ‘Explaining International Relations, Empires and European Miracles: A Response’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 34 (2006): 549. Mann maintains the notion of the European miracle from Jones, *The European Miracle*. For a critique of the Weberian position see, Jack Barbalet, *Weber, Passion and Profits: The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), which has an excellent critique of Weber’s efforts to denigrate the work of the early twentieth century Jews and thereby dismiss their contributions to the Euromodernity project.

²³¹ Notable among those who predicated Western society on the primacy of Greek civilisation is Georg Hegel. See Georg Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (Scotts Valley, CA: Information Age Publishing, 2009 [1831]), for the famous paragraph: “The History of the World travels from East to West, for Europe is absolutely the end of History, Asia the beginning. The History of the World has an East κατ’ ἐξοχήν; [*par excellence*] (the term East in itself is entirely relative), for although the Earth forms a sphere, History performs no circle round it, but has on the contrary a determinate East, viz., Asia. Here rises the outward physical Sun, and in the West it sinks down: here consentaneously rises the Sun of self-consciousness, which diffuses a nobler brilliance. The History of the World is the discipline of the uncontrolled natural will, bringing it into obedience to a Universal principle and conferring subjective freedom. The East knew and to

exert the same, where not only the sciences were predicated on Greek civilisation, but theology too.²³² A good example of how Graeco-Roman patrimony was inscribed in Christianity's self-understanding is instantiated in Robert Hood's, *Must God Remain Greek: Afro Cultures and God-Talk*, where he demonstrates how "the idea of Greek civilization and literature as organizing tools" defined the Christian's "own identity culturally and even our own understanding of God and Jesus Christ theologically".²³³ This I argue is played out in the Graeco-Roman facing optic of the guild.

Young asserts that Greece continues to be presented "as a self-generated pure origin, both of itself and of European culture".²³⁴ This Greek miracle lives on in academic (read: biblical studies), municipal and civic spaces.²³⁵ Martin Bernal perhaps more than anyone else opened up this debate when he controversially attributed Ancient Greek civilisation to Egyptian origins, suggesting that the later Western civilisation contrariwise had its roots in Egyptian civilisation.²³⁶ Bernal's

the present day knows only that One is Free; the Greek and Roman world, that some are free; the German World knows that All are free" (p. 103). In truth, Hegel's German is the pure fulfilment, the primogeniture κατ' ἐξοχήν of Greece.

²³² Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, xxviii, "systematic theology must be credited to Christianity under the influence of Hellenism, since there were only fragments in Islam and in a few Indian sects".

²³³ Robert Hood, *Must God Remain Greek? Afro-Cultures and God-Talk* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1990), 4. For a typical example of Graeco-Roman culture providing a template for the cognitive construal of biblical meaning see *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament: Selected Forms and Genres*, ed. David E. Aune, SBLSPS (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 1988), xxi, where "the purpose of this collection of essays is to demonstrate both the relevance and importance of various styles, forms and genres of ancient Mediterranean literature for the understanding and interpretation of the New Testament", (Introduction).

²³⁴ Robert Young, 'Egypt in America: Black Athena, Racism and Colonial Discourse', in *Racism, Modernity and Identity: On the Western Front*, eds. Ali Rattansi and Sallie Westwood (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 155.

²³⁵ John A. North, 'Attributing Colour to the Ancient Egyptians: Reflections on the Black Athena', in *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, eds. David O'Connor and Andrew Reid (London: Left Coast Press Inc., 2003), 32. North states: "textbooks galore start their story from the Greek foundations of modern culture; university courses, not least 'Western Civilization' courses, begin with the Greek City, its cultural and political activities and the writings of its citizens; television programmes pick up on the same theme, without any suggestion that this attribution of credit is at all contested or problematic. The Greek miracle seems beyond challenge".

²³⁶ Martin Bernal, *Black Athena the Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization: The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985*, vol. 1 (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 1987).

Black Athena, though controversial, opens up spaces over thirty years on for inviting questions on the racialisation of theological discourse in the academy.²³⁷ Sally Riad and Deborah Jones, by a play on words in “The battle for Athena: from diversity to university” – where the prefix *di* denotes *divergence*, *uni* denotes convergent oneness (i.e., potentially antithetical notions) – argue the political way in which Bernal’s *Black Athena* was handled by the academy demonstrates its hegemonic interests to control knowledge.²³⁸ Picking up the theme, Kelley’s *Racialised Jesus* raises the question, to what extent does the presentation of the origins of Christianity and its posterity depend on the Greek civilisation motif of the modernisation project of the West? Indeed, this is a racialised project.²³⁹

In the homogenisation of the West, this Greek-rooted-Christianity has been consistently used as its binding agent.²⁴⁰ The presence of Muslims, Jews and Africans who have for long periods occupied significant areas of Europe, at times sourcing much of its modern civilisation, has been thus ignored.²⁴¹ In this way, it

²³⁷ See a riposte by Bernal’s detractors and the lively exchange that followed, in Mary Lefkowitz, *Not Out of Africa: How ‘Afrocentrism’ Became An Excuse To Teach Myth As History* (New York: Basic Books, 1996); *Black Athena Revisited*, eds. Mary R. Lefkowitz and Guy M. Rogers (Chapel Hill, NC: University of N. Carolina Press, 1996); Martin Bernal, *Black Athena Writes Back: Martin Bernal Responds to His Critics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2001). For an excellent account of how the debate has been racialised see *African Athena: New Agendas*, eds. Daniel Orrells, Gurinder K. Bhambra, and Tessa Roynon (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

²³⁸ Sally Riad and Deborah Jones, ‘Invoking Black Athena and Its Debates’, *Journal of Management History*, 19.3 (2013): 407–409.

²³⁹ Kelley, *Racializing Jesus*, 5.

²⁴⁰ For a postulate on the civilising spread of Europe during the Middle Ages through the integration of the universalisation of geography with religion see John M. Headley, ‘Geography and Empire in the Late Renaissance: Botero’s Assignment, Western Universalism, and the Civilizing Process’, *Renaissance Quarterly* 53 (2000): 1119–55. For the notion that Europe was seen as “spatially coextensive with the Roman Empire”, and Christianity served as the singular binding agent right through to the dawning of modernity, see Anthony Pagden, ‘Europe: Conceptualizing a Continent’, in *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union*, ed. Anthony Pagden (Washington, DC; Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 33–54.

²⁴¹ David Nirenberg, ‘Race and the Middle Ages: The Case of Spain and Its Jews’, in *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires*, ed. Margaret R. Greer, Walter D. Mignolo, and Maureen Quilligan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 71–87; Barbara Fuchs, ‘The Spanish Race’, in *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires*, ed. Margaret R. Greer, Walter D. Mignolo, and Maureen Quilligan

has been positioned as providing a unifying culture that has steadied the inexorable production of ‘modernity’.²⁴²

1.4 Postcolonial Theory and Biblical Studies

Turning to biblical studies, Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner and Mayra River rightly state in their introduction: “the engagement of postcolonial theory by theology is incoherent outside of the effects of liberation theology.”²⁴³ James Cone might then be considered in many ways as the literary progenitor of Christian theology as liberation in that he was the first theologian to have

(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 88–98; Kathryn Burns, ‘Unfixing Race’, in *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires*, ed. Margaret R. Greer, Walter D. Mignolo, and Maureen Quilligan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 188–204.

²⁴² When invoking notions of the West, a cautionary note is warranted. Neil Lazarus has shown how Eurocentrism as a phenomenon has often been conflated with the notion of the West. This means that postcolonialism has mobilised a certain category of the West without historical warrant. See Neil Lazarus, ‘What Postcolonial Theory Doesn’t Say’, *Race and Class* 53 (2011): 3–27. This critique is in many ways a development of Lazarus’s seminal work, *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). For the need to define the West in terms of its vectors of disenfranchisement: imperialism, capitalism, nationalism and bourgeoisie classism, neocolonialism, etc. see Neil Lazarus, ‘The Fetish of “the West” in Postcolonial Theory’, in *Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Crystal Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 44–64. For example, see how the Guyanese postcolonial critic, Walter Rodney, insisted on describing capitalism as a function of the imperialism and colonialism of Western Europe, thereby avoiding equivocation with the ‘West’ – Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1981 [1972]). For the way capitalism has long been viewed as the mainstay of modernity, see Jack Goody, *Capitalism and Modernity: The Great Debate* (Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity, 2004). For an example of the way an artificial West/non-West binary is imposed on Europe too – i.e., Western Europe and Eastern Europe, the developed and the under-developed, see Raymond Williams, *The Year 2000* (New York: Pantheon, 1983), 200. Nevertheless, it is arguable that Eastern Europe – and those countries that did not directly engage with the colonial enterprise – has in the long run benefited from the hegemonic exploits of Western Europe, and is therefore in this vein complicit in the story of the ‘West’. See Gurinder K. Bhabra, ‘Postcolonial Europe, or Understanding Europe in Times of the Postcolonial,’ in *The SAGE Handbook of European Studies*, ed. Chris Rumford (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2009), 69–86. This notion of the West as an ideological construct is confluent with Stuart Hall’s definition in Stuart Hall, ‘The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power’, in *Formations of Modernity*, eds. Bram Gieben and Stuart Hall (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 277–78. Here, Hall defines the West as a concept or idea, a language for imagining a set of complex stories, ideas, historical events and social relationships. The West functions in ways which (1) allow ‘us’ to characterize and classify societies into categories, (2) condense complex images of other societies through a system of representation, (3) provide a standard model of comparison, and (4) provide criteria of evaluation against which other societies can be ranked.

²⁴³ *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*, ed. by Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2012), 5.

connected liberation as the generative thread of Christian theology.²⁴⁴ This is not to be confused with the actual phrase, ‘Liberation Theology’, with which Gutiérrez is primarily credited.²⁴⁵ Postcolonial studies, then, has to be seen as a liberationist, emancipatory and transformative project. And it is in this vein that it engaged with biblical studies, beginning with a collection of essays in 1996: *Postcolonial and Scriptural Reading* by Laura Donaldson,²⁴⁶ but advanced by the widely regarded doyen of postcolonial biblical studies, Rasiah S. Sugirtharajah.²⁴⁷

There are two key essays that rehearse the historical engagement of biblical studies with postcolonial studies: One by Stephen D. Moore and Fernando F. Segovia, ‘Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Beginnings, Trajectories, Intersections’,²⁴⁸ and the other by Fernando F. Segovia, ‘Mapping the Postcolonial Optic in Biblical Criticism’.²⁴⁹ While both are helpful to trace the genealogical journey of the discipline’s scholarship, they do not address the

²⁴⁴ James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997 [1969]), which was closely followed by James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010 [1970]).

²⁴⁵ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, trans. by Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (London: SCM Press, 2001 [1971]).

²⁴⁶ *Postcolonialism and Scriptural Reading*, ed. Laura E. Donaldson, Semeia 75 (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 1996). Moore, ‘Paul after Empire’, 12, claims that this collection of essays was probably not seen before 1997 when Horsley’s *Paul and Empire* was published, because ‘Semeia’ experienced a backlog of works. Cf. *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997).

²⁴⁷ Sugirtharajah’s mark on the discipline probably began in 1991 with his edited volume, R. S. Sugirtharajah, ed., *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World - 25th Anniversary Edition* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2017). However, for a development in Sugirtharajah’s more recent work see, R. S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and Asia: From the Pre-Christian Era to the Postcolonial Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

²⁴⁸ Stephen D. Moore and Fernando F. Segovia, ‘Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Beginnings, Trajectories, Intersections’, in *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections*, ed. by Stephen D. Moore and Fernando F. Segovia (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 1–22. Segovia, in particular, is an earlier pioneer of biblical postcolonialism.

²⁴⁹ Segovia, ‘Mapping the Postcolonial Optic in Biblical Criticism’, 23–78.

development of postcolonial criticism as a critical method *per se*, but as a developing mode of interpretation.

In addition, there are two seminal texts on the development of methodology in biblical studies and postcolonial studies. First is Simon Samuel's seminal monograph, *A Postcolonial Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*, which is helpful in demonstrating biblical studies' critical engagement with the theories within postcolonial studies as method.²⁵⁰ The second examines how biblical studies

²⁵⁰ Samuel, *A Postcolonial Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*, 14–32. Samuel makes regular reference to Rasiah S. Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism: Contesting the Interpretation*, The Biblical Seminar 64 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999). The four models are: the essentialist/nativist model, the resistance/ recuperative model, the diasporic intercultural (subcultural) model and the strategic essentialism and transcultural hybridity model. With respect to the Essentialist/Nativist model, which aims to reconstruct the true histories of the colonised subjectivities in the text, there is some correlation with my attempting to raise questions and as a consequence, at least in part, reconstitute the culture and history of the Ethiopian Eunuch. Examples of the essentialist/nativist model are: Laura E. Donaldson, 'Postcolonialism and Biblical Reading: An Introduction', in *Postcolonialism and Scriptural Reading*, ed. by Laura E. Donaldson, Semeia 75 (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 1996), 1–14; *A Vanishing Mediator: The Presence/Absence of the Bible in Postcolonialism*, ed. Roland C. Boer, Semeia 88 (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2001); Mark G. Brett, *Decolonizing God: The Bible in the Tides of Empire*, The Bible in the Modern World, 16 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008); *In the Name of God: The Bible in the Colonial Discourse of Empire*, eds. C. L. Crouch and Jonathan Stökl, BibInt 126 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2013). With respect to the Resistance/Recuperate model, which seeks to expose both the colonialism that dominates interests in biblical studies and the ignorance of this fact in biblical studies, I am, in a sense, redressing the colonial interests of successive readers of the Ethiopian Eunuch's story. Examples of the Resistance/Recuperative model are: *Postcolonial Interventions: Essays in Honor of R.S. Sugirtharajah*, ed. Tat-Siong Benny Liew (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009); David Joy, *Mark and Its Subalterns: A Hermeneutical Paradigm for a Postcolonial Context* (London: Equinox, 2008); Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000); Cheryl B. Anderson, 'Reflections in an Interethnic/racial Era on Interethnic/racial Marriage in Ezra', in *They Were All Together in One Place? Toward Minority Biblical Criticism*, eds. Randall C. Bailey, Tat-Siong Benny Liew, and Fernando F. Segovia, SemeiaSt 57 (Atlanta: SBL, 2009), 47–64; Kelley, *Racializing Jesus*; Simon Mainwaring, *Mark, Mutuality, and Mental Health: Encounters with Jesus*, SemeiaSt 79 (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2014). Vincent Wimbush's pioneering work as founder of The Institute of Signifying Scriptures (<http://www.signifyingscriptures.org/>) and *The Abeng: Journal for Transdisciplinary Criticism* could also be subsumed under the Resistance/Recuperative model. See, Vincent L. Wimbush, *Scripturalectics: The Management of Meaning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017). *Refractions of the Scriptural: Critical Orientation as Transgression*, ed. by Vincent L. Wimbush, Routledge Studies in Religion, 48 (New York; London: Routledge, 2016). *Scripturalizing the Human: The Written as the Political*, ed. by Vincent L. Wimbush, Routledge Studies in Religion, 46 (New York; London: Routledge, 2015). Daniel L. Dreisbach, *Reading the Bible with the Founding Fathers* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2017). With respect to the Diasporic/Intercultural model, which encourages the use of one's hybridity to problematise the reading of the texts that have been colonised, I am, also in a sense, using my social location (standpoint theory) as a hybridised reader to drive intuitively my deconstruction of colonised readings while, at the same time, minimising the possibilities for my interests to obstruct my view. (See Introduction.) With respect to the Strategic Essentialism and Transcultural Hybridity model, which seeks to employ hybridity as an interrogative, analytical tool to transform normative histories, I am, in a sense, using hybridity to imagine the colonised subject of study as a multivalent agent. Yet, these models do not

interface with postcolonial criticism: Anna Runesson's *Exegesis in the Making: Postcolonialism and New Testament Studies*.²⁵¹ Runesson is interested in the way (historical critical) exegesis as a Western biblical methodology operates within postcolonial perspectives. Both texts stick to the historical concerns of the biblical texts and their interpretations.

1.5 Whiteness and Conviviality at the Behest of Postcolonial Theory

1.5.1 The Quest for a Conceptual Critical Lens – The Impulse

Gender and sexuality, race and class, Euromodernity and the west, and postmodernism and the Cartesian gaze are articulated in postcolonial criticism, the impulses of which may be captured as 'whiteness' and 'critical conviviality'. Whiteness is identified as the postcolonial trope of deconstruction, i.e., for Part 1 of the dissertation; and conviviality the postcolonial trope of reconstruction, i.e., for Part 2 of the dissertation. In this section, I will critically demonstrate how whiteness and 'critical conviviality' can serve as postcolonial tropes and form the postcolonial impulse to interrogate successive readings of the Ethiopian eunuch. (Since 'critical conviviality' is created as a new hermeneutic, more time will be spent on theorising the basis for its construction and utility.)

sufficiently afford the epistemic magnitude required to interrogate the race thinking of the Cartesian gaze. (See section 1.8 n. 335.) Their appropriation helps to disentangle the 'how' of colonial operations. They do not address the 'why not' of colonial denials. They do not adequately expose the conceptual blind spots of the Cartesian reader.

²⁵¹ Anna Runesson, *Exegesis in the Making: Postcolonialism and New Testament Studies*, BibInt 103 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010). This text attempts to explain the efficacy of postcolonial studies when adopted by biblical studies by critically processing postcoloniality as it emerges in the twentieth century, "via a discussion of the theoretical location of all exegesis" (p. 8). It helps to make the point that unless epistemes, such as race thinking, whiteness and Euromodernity – though these are not specifically mentioned – are viewed in terms of their articulations with materiality, the shortcomings that postcoloniality seeks to excoriate will fail to be deconstructed adequately.

1.6 Whiteness as a Postcolonial Impulse

1.6.1 A Floating Signifier

Having established whiteness as a literary trope identifiable with the impulse of an agonistic postcolonial critical theory, a discussion on how it might strategically be appropriated in this chapter is *apropos*. The research question of ‘why can the Ethiopian eunuch not be a Jew?’ propitiously allows one to direct emphasis onto the conceptualities that motivate particular historiographies of agency. As such, what has shaped different readerships’ normative, interpretative gaze of the Ethiopian eunuch?

1.6.1.1 A Floating Composite Signifier

Whiteness offers a set of conceptual, heuristic tools that enables one to articulate different, penetrative questions to get at a fuller picture of the truth – questions, which challenge the political, universalising hegemony of discourses (in the Hallian sense of the word) that have, in time, become institutionalised.²⁵² When applied in this study, it is whiteness’s elusive, yet universalising prowess as indicated by the DuBoisian epigraph that must be tracked: “But what on earth is whiteness that one should so desire it?’ ... [It is]is the ownership of the earth forever and ever, Amen!”²⁵³

However, to track its performativity as ownership, whiteness should be thought of as a composite, contingent episteme – a composite discursive signifier – which,

²⁵² See Stuart Hall, ‘Who Needs “Identity”?’ in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. by Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London; Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 1996), 1–17. Here Hall’s sense of discourse is constructed from Foucault and Gramsci, though Hall is more concerned with the ambivalence of discourse in that the subject cannot be “whole, centred, stable... or autonomous” but internally fragmented, incomplete, multiple (Foucault), and produced and positioned (Gramsci) – where the ‘post-Cartesian’ (‘Who Needs “Identity”?’ p. 1) subject is subjected to and determined within the discourse – Stuart Hall, ‘The Meaning of New Times’, in *New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s*, ed. by Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques (London; New York: Verso Books, 1989), 120.

²⁵³ Du Bois, *Darkwater*, 16.

to varying degrees, inflects different dimensions of life in both the global North and South. This is because of its long history as an essentialised identity, resting at the apex of a system of racial domination.²⁵⁴ It began as a strategic discursive formation in the early modern period, but at different historical conjunctures and contingencies. Hence, its ‘composite-ness’. Even then it is difficult to define and less inclined to name itself. At best, it hovers as an elusive spectre, emerging at multiple, uneven sites of history, before conflating itself into one. It may be thought of as having its discursive origins in the almost beatification of the ‘fair’ white English women during Elizabethan times²⁵⁵ as epitomised by Queen Elizabeth I,²⁵⁶ though on the heels of a couple of centuries of art cultural creations that, as Madeline Caviness argues, normativise Christian European identity as whiteness;²⁵⁷ or in the justification of the expulsion of the African Moors and Jews in 1492 from the Iberian Peninsula,²⁵⁸ and later the Moriscos in 1609;²⁵⁹ or between the contact of the ‘white’ Dutch and ‘black’ Spaniards;²⁶⁰ or

²⁵⁴ For a comprehensive and critical look at the invention of whiteness in the north Atlantic, see Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race: Racial Oppression and Social Control*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (London; New York: Verso Books, 2012).

²⁵⁵ Walter Clyde Curry, *The Middle English Ideal of Personal Beauty: As Found in the Metrical Romances, Chronicles, and Legends of the XIII, XIV, and XV Centuries* (Chicago: Leopold Classic Library (1916), 2015), 3, 80–98.

²⁵⁶ Elkin Calhoun Wilson, *England’s Eliza* (London: Routledge, 1966 [1939]), 337.

²⁵⁷ Madeline Caviness, ‘From the Self-Invention of the Whiteman in the Thirteenth Century to “The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly”’, *Different Visions: A Journal of New Perspectives on Medieval Art* 1 (2008): 1–33. Heng builds on Caviness’s work to demonstrate how “both epidermal whiteness and epidermal blackness [became] touchstones of raced identity” from the thirteenth century onwards, Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 8, 181–256.

²⁵⁸ María DeGuzmán, *Spain’s Long Shadow: The Black Legend, Off-Whiteness, and Anglo-American Empire* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005). David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996). For commentary on the Iberian blood purity statutes, which asserted that even the bodies of *conversos* (and later *moriscos*) bore traces of an inferior Jewish (and Muslim) essence, see Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Assimilation and Racial Anti-Semitism: The Iberian and the German Models*, Leo Baeck Memorial Lecture, 26 (New York: Leo Baeck Institute, 1982), 15.

²⁵⁹ Barbara Fuchs, *Exotic Nation: Maurophilia and the Construction of Early Modern Spain* (Philadelphia, PN: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

²⁶⁰ J. N. Hillgarth, *The Mirror of Spain, 1500-1700: The Formation of a Myth* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 323–27.

between the contact of the white owners along with the white working class²⁶¹ who were coopted, and the black indentured workers-cum-enslaved in late sixteenth century USA;²⁶² or in the pursuit of nationhood;²⁶³ or when normalised during the Enlightenment;²⁶⁴ or when reinforced in the Reconstruction era of USA;²⁶⁵ or in the racial logic of “scientific racism”;²⁶⁶ or in its complicity in the wage-labour divisions and land-conquest-commodification of capitalism;²⁶⁷ or in its assimilation of different European nationalities in USA;²⁶⁸ or in the Christian imaginary during the ‘Age of Discovery’, imagining itself as a theological trope that centres and universalises the white body and its civilisation, which is predicated on the reordering of creation and land.²⁶⁹ These irregular and

²⁶¹ Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill, NC: University North Carolina Press, 2012 [1968]). Working class were mainly comprised of Irish settlers, vagrants sent to colonies as indentured servants, and indigenous Americans, who shared the same plantation space as the Africans. See, Cian T. McMahon, *The Global Dimensions of Irish Identity: Race, Nation, and the Popular Press, 1840-1880* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press Books, 2015), 157–61.

²⁶² Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010).

²⁶³ *Creating White Australia*, ed. by Jane Carey and Claire McLisky (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2009).

²⁶⁴ Wendy Sutherland, *Staging Blackness and Performing Whiteness in Eighteenth-Century German Drama* (London; New York: Routledge, 2017).

²⁶⁵ Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010). 1863–7.

²⁶⁶ Cathy Boeckmann, *A Question of Character: Scientific Racism and the Genres of American Fiction, 1892-1912* (Tuscaloosa, AL; London: University of Alabama Press, 2000). Robert Carter, ‘Genes, Genomes and Genealogies: The Return of Scientific Racism?’, *ERS* 30.4 (2007): 546–556.

²⁶⁷ Alexander Anievas and Kerem Nisancıoğlu, *How the West Came to Rule: The Geopolitical Origins of Capitalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2015).

²⁶⁸ Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999). David R. Roediger, *Colored White: Transcending the Racial Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). David R. Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants Became White. The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (Cambridge, MA: Basic Books, 2005). Whiteness became the social solution to prevent the intermingling. See further, Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, Routledge Classics (New York; Oxford: Routledge, 2009). The same could be said for the Italians, *Are Italians White? How Race Is Made in America*, ed. by Jennifer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno (Routledge, 2012); and Canadians, *Revisiting The Great White North?: Reframing Whiteness, Privilege, and Identity in Education*, ed. by Darren E. Lund and Paul R. Carr, 2nd ed. (Rotterdam; Boston; Taipei: Springer, 2015).

²⁶⁹ Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*. Jennings ties the racial logic of supersessionism to European identity, a superiority complex which theologically and culturally subordinated Jewish people and their cousins, Muslims. This in time served as a pretext for doing the same with Africans. Carter, *Race*, 59-133, on the other hand, but complementarily, argues that whiteness as a sociopolitically structural-aesthetic order

dispersive iterations demonstrate not only the floating and composite nature of whiteness, but its porosity in terms of its attempt to bury factional differences. This was achieved at the unifying behest of the ‘Age of Discovery’, where the competing European interests for black bodies – even in the American colonies – were reconciled and rallied.²⁷⁰

Then, how might whiteness be adopted and adapted for the purposes of examining the treatment of the Ethiopian eunuch by the Church Fathers? To begin with, Audrey Thompson offers us four groups of theories with which whiteness studies might operate: material, discursive, institutional, and personal/relational.²⁷¹ When considered in light of it being a floating, composite signifier, these four areas may best be thought of as interlocking, composite, conceptual vectors constitutive of critical whiteness. It is in the performativity of whiteness that these vectors come alive.²⁷²

In this dissertation, the material vector of whiteness focuses on the tangible sites of bodily recognition in the texts. The pigmentation of the Ethiopian eunuch, for example, is a site of recognition, which, when traversed, leads potentially to epistemic violence. In a similar vein, the second group of theories, the discursive

functioned through Kant as a replacement doctrine of creation, but was made possible centuries before through a loss of a Jewish-inflected account in the early Christian discourse of Gnosticism.

²⁷⁰ Yet, from these conjunctures it may be deduced that the common condition for the composite emergence of whiteness is ‘crises’, which themselves sporadically and unevenly formed the condition for the unifying reproduction of whiteness as a method of social control. Whiteness is the composite of multiple processes of racialisation throughout history and through crises it betrays the anxiety and tendency to define itself out of being as much as into being.

²⁷¹ Thompson, ‘Summary of Whiteness Theory’.

²⁷² For an excellent example of the embodiment of performativity in postcolonial contexts, see Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press Books, 2003). For a theoretical postulate on performativity in postmodern literature, see Jacques Derrida, “‘The Strange Institution Called Literature’: An Interview with Jacques Derrida”, in *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (New York; London: Routledge, 1992), 33–75. For an excellent appropriation of performativity theory to Feminist studies, Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993).

vector of whiteness, focuses on language and symbol markers within the discourse that are anticipative of hegemonic control. This may be seen, for example, in the ethnic reasoning of the Church Fathers or in the way ethnoreligious binaries are used to frame a discourse where Jews and Graeco-Gentiles, say, are pitted one against the other, with one serving as a foil for the other, thereby rendering the other as privileged and, by implication, superior. The third theory, which Thompson suggests whiteness might employ, is the institutional vector of whiteness. Mindful of the material and discursive vectors, the institutional vector will help to focus on the systems of interpretation that are developed from particular reading strategies (such as historical criticism), which omits (e.g., like blind spots) and commits (e.g., exegetical assumptions and biases) processes and procedures, resulting in privileging whiteness as normative. Lastly, the personal/relational vector will focus on the nature of the relationship of the reader(ship) with the Ethiopian eunuch. For example, is the reader benevolent and generous to, and thence coopting of, the Ethiopian eunuch, because of his/her exceptional, privileged status of whiteness?²⁷³ In light of this, Thompson's constitutives of whiteness, now adopted as conceptual interlocking vectors of composite whiteness, can be appropriated for the wider examination of the texts of the different readerships of the Ethiopian eunuch.²⁷⁴

²⁷³ It is useful, I suggest, to think of the adoption of these interlocking theories, now constitutives of the performativity of whiteness, as vectors, since they will serve to pin down and locate the otherwise elusive and amorphous nature of whiteness. It is also inevitable that these constitutives cum vectors will not be applied systematically in a linear way, since they are interrelatedly composite, reciprocally and dialectically operating to uncover the normative gaze.

²⁷⁴ Ruth Frankenberg's seminal work, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (London: Routledge, 1993), which first formally introduced the theory of whiteness, argues that "the material and discursive dimensions of whiteness are always, in practice, interconnected" (p. 2). She not only couples the material and discursive vectors, but also suggests that the institutional and personal/relational dimensions are interrelated (p. 22). For an example of how the material, discursive, institutional and relational dimensions are interrelated, see Ware's critique of British politics in, Vron Ware, 'Island Racism: Gender, Place, and White Power', in *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*, ed. by Ruth Frankenberg (Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 1997), 283–310, without the person being essentialised as 'good' or 'bad'. Cf. Ruth Frankenberg, 'Introduction: Local Whitenesses, Localizing Whiteness', in *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*, ed. by Ruth Frankenberg

1.6.1.2 Antecedents of Whiteness

One has to bear in mind that whiteness, as Du Bois signalled before, is a modern phenomenon. Therefore, any reading back of whiteness into pre-modern history stands the risk of anachronism in that one could be imposing a modernist construct in a way that is incongruous with the historical context and data. Hence, it has to be borne in mind that since we are examining ancient, premodern texts what are being identified, at the most, are the antecedents of whiteness in its inchoate, prenatal forms – i.e., echoes anticipative of fuller meanings when adopted by later modern readerships in their material, discursive, institutional, and relational guise. In which case, the episteme of whiteness as a strategically floating, composite formation might have a longer history than Euromodernity. This is because as a floating, composite signifier of power it probably incarnates itself in different modes and guises, depending on different historical contingencies. Yet, it is recognisable in its later composite nature and contingencies. In this light, what Russell Ferguson avers is pertinent:

The place from which power is exercised is often a hidden place. When we try to pin it down, the center always seems to be somewhere else. Yet we know that this phantom center, elusive as it is, exerts a real, undeniable power over the entire framework of our culture, and over the ways we think about it.²⁷⁵

It seems then that the shifting phantom of power not only pertains to these times, but also to as far back as human history allows. Good work, for instance, has been done on how the Graeco-Romans developed racial formations around

(Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 1997), 18. To essentialise whiteness as white people or white culture is to pass over a critique of their location in racial hierarchy in favour of “notions of essence and original sin”. Such as discourse succeeds in reifying cultures as hermetically sealed from others, and erases “the processes through which cultures as practice comes into being”.

²⁷⁵ Russell Ferguson, ‘Introduction: Invisible Center’, in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, ed. by Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minh-ha, and Cornel West (New York; Cambridge, MA; London: The New Museum of Contemporary Art & MIT Press, 1990), 9.

their concept of *οἰκουμένη* and notions of environmental (determinative) theory.²⁷⁶ Their imperial exploits were motivated by civilisational ambitions based on culture and morality, not on race, not on the basis of nature. Nevertheless, power was no less deployed.

Notwithstanding, this spectral, incorporeal kind of power has likely been iterated in an incipient *proto* form of whiteness as early as the second century, in the case of the Church Fathers. In which case, its pre-modern form might be seen as invisible and elusive since it privileges not only the Graeco-Roman ideal type, but also an eventually modern Eurocentric reading of Graeco-Gentile ‘Christianity’ and as a method of socio-religious control. In this vein, the Graeco-Gentile ideal type might be captured as anticipative, and a signifier of, a later more developed whiteness, where the inner logics of their metaphysics are confluent. Whiteness is then an ideological term and functions as such in this dissertation. As such, it is useful to think of the floating, composite signification of whiteness as an assemblage of social relations and processes constituted by an earlier Graeco-Roman *cum* Graeco-Gentile *ideal* germ.

While whiteness has the constitutive of the Cartesian episteme, the *Adversus Judaeos* trope has the Platonic dualism episteme, which is an antecedent of the later Cartesian episteme (see section 1.3.2). While the racialised mode of analysis is ‘ethnic reasoning’ with respect to the *Adversus Judaeos* trope, it is ‘race

²⁷⁶ Denise Eileen McCoskey, *Race: Antiquity and Its Legacy* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 48. McCoskey convincingly suggests that the mapping of racial difference, reinforced by the Persian Wars, lay behind the Greek’s oppositional category of the Barbarian. This was rationalised by grandiose notions of their mythical lineage. On the other hand, the Romans later rationalised their racialised difference of Roman/Greek/Barbarian by their culture and morality. Contra, Erich S. Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 198. However, Frank M. Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1970), 173, was the first to note how environmental determinism theory explains the racial mapping of the Greeks and Romans though without reference to racial inferiority.

thinking’ – a later of iteration of ‘ethnic reasoning’ – with respect to the whiteness trope.

In order to evaluate the conceptual gaze of the early readership of the Ethiopian eunuch story, we will first look at what appears to be the displacement of the Jewish ideal type by the Church Fathers as a function of identity politics, and their simultaneous shift to the Graeco-Gentile ideal type due in part to the advancement of the *Adversus Judaeos* tradition. The Platonic dualism constitutives of the *Adversus Judaeos* trope will be seen to have similar properties to that of Cartesian episteme of whiteness. Then we will see, given the precedence the role of Hellenistic civilisation played as the progenitor of European civilisation and its modern narrative, how the Graeco-Gentile prototype eventually becomes the property of whiteness. The successive readers’ conceptuality of the Ethiopian eunuch’s agency will be the focus of this sea change, where he might be seen to be subjected to the porous gaze of this proto-whiteness as it seeks to reconcile the anxieties and ambitions of early Christianity.

1.7 ‘Critical Conviviality’: An Alternative Interpretative Tool

‘Critical Conviviality’ is the second literary tool derived and adapted from the agonistic impulse of postcolonial studies. Since it is a ‘new’ hermeneutic, a working definition from the outset is warranted, after which a more detailed argument will be carefully advanced:

‘Critical conviviality’ is a conceptual lens, which offers ways of seeing collectivist Afroasiatic societies in late antiquity in terms their organically free human movement, relations and hospitality, given the natural contingencies of Sanjay Subrahmanyam’s ‘connected histories’, but to see them from liminal perspectives of

hybridity, which itself is characterised by the carnivalesque and Goto's notion of 'as if'.

Hence, 'critical conviviality' should be seen to provide a more vitalising but holistic conceptuality of the ancient text and milieu, since it focuses on modes of togetherness especially within collectivist societies.²⁷⁷ To set up 'critical conviviality' theoretically as a hermeneutical prism, I will now explore it for the purposes of this dissertation in three ways. First, it will be processed for its literary value along its horizontal axis; second, along its vertical axis of liminality as characterised by notions of the carnivalesque and Courtney Goto's 'as if'; and third, its benefit as a contestation to the industrial productivity of historical criticism.

1.7.1 'Critical Conviviality' along a Horizontal Axis – Temporal

As alluded to in the Introduction, my use of 'critical conviviality' as a postcolonial literary tool builds on Gilroy's postulate.²⁷⁸ Whereas Gilroy's definition focuses on groups of people living next to each other without their respective culture being a barrier,²⁷⁹ my reading of the conviviality of the first century Afroasiatic strip, its Sinaitic peninsula and adjoining Nile passage concerns the free movement of peoples. I am suggesting that there was ethnic plurality in the free movement of peoples, especially within diasporic communities and with respect

²⁷⁷ John J. Pilch, 'Collectivism', ed. by John J. Pilch and Bruce J. Malina, *Handbook of Biblical Social Values* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016), 20–5.

²⁷⁸ Gilroy built his theory on the work of Ivan Illich. Illich viewed conviviality as the means of "autonomous and creative intercourse among persons, and the intercourse of persons with their environment" – Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* (London: Marion Boyars, 2001). It is a conceptualisation that assumes conviviality as an "individual freedom realized in personal interdependence and, as such, [constituting] an intrinsic ethical value" (p.24). Although, conviviality has a genealogy that extends beyond Illich.

²⁷⁹ This focus on the temporal, horizontal movements between people nuances Gilroy's conviviality. His is a conviviality that withstands the individualism of Euromodernity. It is one that is based upon the tolerant sensibility of an 'enlightened' population, inculcated through the civic institutions of the nation and percolated down with greater magnitude and magnanimous results to later generations. See Gilroy, *After Empire*, 108–9. Gilroy's conviviality is therefore more than the English connotation of jovial and festive togetherness, or French *convivialité*, which connotes a bonhomie-type joviality.

to sacred journeys such as pilgrimages.²⁸⁰ It was the geopolitical conditions inculcated by the Roman Empire that allowed for forms of agency associated with this free movement of trans-border peoples.

On the other hand, ancient conviviality was more like Lourdes Arizpe's notion of *convivencia*, which highlighted the peaceful coexistence that mythically typified Christians, Jews and Muslims in medieval Spain under Muslim rule.²⁸¹ They experienced the world together – *convivencia* – even though their experiences were uneven, chequered and sometimes contradictory. Yet, absent in Arizpe's description is the sociocultural script and generatively egalitarian spirit of hospitality, which was foundational to movement within and between ancient societies.²⁸² The fluid movement between different ancient, diasporic Jewish communities, for example, would have been facilitated by the collectivist cultural value of hospitality, a constitutive of trans-border conviviality.

1.7.1.1 Collectivist Hospitality: A Constituent of Postcolonialism

Henry Cadbury relegated hospitality to being “a minor personal interest” of Luke-Acts.²⁸³ However, in concert with ancient ethical protocols recent scholars see hospitality as central to Luke's commendation of the gospel, citing for instance Luke 9:11-17; 10:1-16; 13:22-40; 14:7-11; 15; 16: 1-9, 19-31; 24:13-35, Acts 9:3-22, 43-10:48; 22:6-22; 26:12-19; 28¹-10.²⁸⁴ Moreover, it is in the context

²⁸⁰ Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Travel in Antiquity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 23–34, 75–6.

²⁸¹ Lourdes Arizpe, *Culture, Diversity and Heritage: Major Studies* (Heidelberg; London: Springer, 2014), 54. The version of conviviality is coined ‘cultural conviviability’, based on the Spanish word *convivencia*, which literally means experiencing the world together. It refers to new social and political pacts, negotiated in the innovative framework of a global ethics, although at a stretch ‘global ethics’ could be framed as Afroasiatic hospitality for the purposes of this hospitality.

²⁸² Gilroy does mention hospitality as an associative of conviviality. But only in passing. For example, see Gilroy, *After Empire*, 108.

²⁸³ Henry J. Cadbury, ‘Lexical Notes on Luke-Acts: III. Luke's Interest in Lodging’, *JBL* 45.3/4 (1926): 305.

²⁸⁴ Andrew E. Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels: Early Christian Hospitality in Its Mediterranean Setting* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005), 135–81; John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1985), 85–123; A. Denaux, ‘The

of hospitality that house ἐκκλησίαι come into being (e.g., Luke 8:39; 10:5-8; Acts 2:14-36; 5:42; 10:34-43; 18:7-17; 19:9; 21:8; 28:30-31).²⁸⁵ Only, Luke's hospitality as endogenous and critical to the horizontal contact of human interactions in the first century, appears to subvert traditional conventions of hospitality laws.

Framing hospitality within the socio-political rubric of honour/shame, Julian Pitt-Rivers presents the standard definition of ancient hospitality in the ancient Mediterranean world (or Afroasiatic world) as an ethical law that structured the engagement between strangers, where due to the honour of the host the status of the stranger is changed to a guest.²⁸⁶ Looking at ways in which the basic word for hospitality, ξένια,²⁸⁷ functioned in Graeco-Roman customs, Andrew Arterbury postulates that the welcome of the provisions and protection of a home to strangers and travellers was central to offering hospitality in antiquity.²⁸⁸ In effect, it respectively reflected the core values of different societies.

Luke is part of a long inculcated, Afroasiatic tradition of hospitality (e.g., Acts 14:8-18; 28:6), originating in “Abraham entertaining angels unawares” (Gen. 18),²⁸⁹ Yet, Bruce Malina extends the notion of ancient hospitality by

Theme of Divine Visits and Human (In)Hospitality in Luke-Acts: Its Old Testament and Graeco-Roman Antecedents', in *The Unity of Luke-Acts*, ed. Jozef Verheyden, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium, CXLII (Leuven: University Press, 1999), 255–80; Brendan Byrne, *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Luke's Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015).

²⁸⁵ Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 105.

²⁸⁶ Julian Alfred Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem or the Politics of Sex: Essays in the Anthropology of the Mediterranean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 94–112. For an understanding of how the societal honour-shame matrix of first century Palestine sheds light on Luke's utility of aligning important people of status with a fledgling Christianity see *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991).

²⁸⁷ The actual word for hospitality is φιλοξενία, which refers to “the welcoming of a stranger”. See Daria Pezzoli-Olgiaiti and others, ‘Hospitality’, ed. by Hans Dieter Betz and others, *Religion Past and Present (Hea-Jog)*, Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011).

²⁸⁸ Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels*, 131–32.

²⁸⁹ Furthermore, Afroasiatic Jews were encouraged to not oppress or mistreat strangers since they were themselves once strangers (Exodus 22:20; 23:9; Lev. 19:34; Deut. 10:19; 23:8). This ran contrary to the violation of the laws of hospitality (Gen. 19) – a violation, which by definition has consequences in breaking down the structure of social roles – see Bruce J. Malina, *The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels* (London;

demonstrating that it was not merely the status of the host but their power-brokerage to levy patronage to the stranger *cum* guest that rendered the new relationship determinative.²⁹⁰ Contradistinctively, however, Jesus subverted the patronage/clientage rubric of hospitality practice by brokering God's power to others as clients – for example his disciples and by extension the evolving ἐκκλησίαι in Acts;²⁹¹ and by discouraging both the ethics of reciprocity (Luke 6:32-35) and the motive to seek honour (14:7-14).²⁹²

What aided and abetted it was the other, equally indispensable and ubiquitous sociocultural script of collectivism.²⁹³ It facilitated a mutuality of belonging, and was probably understood to be:

The belief that the groups in which a person is embedded are each and singly an end in themselves, and as such single persons in the group ought to realize distinctive group values notwithstanding the

New York: Routledge, 2002), 233. This notion of entertaining divine beings is not too dissimilar to Hellenistic gods visiting the earth in human form and being shown hospitality. See *Odyssey* 1.318; 3.58.62 for rewards shown for hospitality; and 9.275-277; 13.213-214 for punishment meted out for the violation of the hospitality code.

²⁹⁰ Malina, *The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels*, 228.

²⁹¹ Malina, *The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels*, 149–67.

²⁹² A way of seeking honour was for the guests to receive gifts from the hosts, Cf. *Odyssey* 4.614; 8.393; 15.114.

²⁹³ Collectivist conviviality in antiquity was normative because Afroasiatic societies were generally gregarious in terms of the rule of the homogeneity of affect. Triandis states, “Collectivism is associated with homogeneity of affect (if ingroup members are sad, one is sad; if joyful, one is joyful); unquestioned acceptance of ingroup norms, attitudes, and values; interpersonal relations within the ingroup are seen as an end in themselves”, Harry C. Triandis, ‘Cross-Cultural Studies of Individualism and Collectivism, 1989’, in *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation*, ed. J. Berman, vol. 35 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 96. This is not to say that it was not uncomplicated, for it was, for example, strictly gendered, where roles of males and females were defined within a patriarchal and matriarchal framework. Nevertheless, this normative way of human relations in antiquity reflected an ethical code of interaction, rather like Derrida's ethics *as* hospitality; hospitality as an expression of cultural practice – not as an organic outgrowth of a host nation, but the cultural predisposition of peoples. Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, trans. by Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 94. Here Derrida insists that hospitality is “the very principle of ethics in its entirety”. Further, he states that “hospitality is culture itself”, in Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001), 16.

weight of one's personal drive in the direction of self-satisfaction.²⁹⁴

Collectivist hospitality not only nuances the nature of conviviality but will be seen to illuminate portions of the Ethiopian eunuch story and thereby the Cartesian blind spots of the reader.²⁹⁵ This is because hospitality is a function of collectivist conviviality as it shapes relations between people and strangers.²⁹⁶ Such a sociality is not defined by policy, legislature or officialdom. It does not aspire towards Kant's ideological "cosmopolitan constitution".²⁹⁷ Kant's idea of hospitality is conceptualised as a human right "to communal possession of the earth's surface".²⁹⁸ When there is a loss of connectivity and relationality to land and space in this way, relationships are idealised as owners meeting owners not as guests meeting guests. What we have in our story are guests meeting guests in

²⁹⁴ Bruce J. Malina, "Collectivism in Mediterranean Culture," in *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament*, eds. Dietmar Neufeld and Richard E. DeMaris (London; New York: Routledge, 2010), 22.

²⁹⁵ Joshua W. Jipp, *Divine Visitations and Hospitality to Strangers in Luke-Acts* (Leiden: Brill, 2013). By using the Malta story of Acts 28.1-10, Jipp argues that the ancient practice of hospitality escapes the reading of many modern biblical scholars, rendering their (mis)reading of the text as inapposite.

²⁹⁶ Although it has ontological precedence over individualism, collectivism makes room for individuality, even if the individuality is not always understood. Individuality is contradistinctive to individualism. While individualism as an ideology emphasises the individual's interests above that of the group, individuality emphasises the difference between individuals and their drive for self-expression without necessarily competing against the group, although this could well happen. Hence, collectivism's emphasis on the group presumes the solidarity of the group. In this way, hospitality would embrace one's agency/identity as fluid, hybrid, liminal, ambiguous, mutually connected, dynamic and agonistic, especially in the first century tracking of the promulgation of the gospel in Acts (cf. 2:42-47; 4:32-35; 6:1-7; *inter alia*).

²⁹⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Kant: Political Writings*, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 106. For a critique of Kant's stance, see *The Conditions of Hospitality: Ethics, Politics, and Aesthetics on the Threshold of the Possible*, ed. by Thomas Claviez (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013). Two essays in particular stand out: Thomas Claviez, 'Transcending Transcendence, or: Transcend~~er~~ances: Limping toward a Radical Concept of Hospitality', 24-41; and Bonnie Honig, 'Proximity and Paradox: Law and Politics in the New Europe', 94-110.

²⁹⁸ Kant, *Political Writings*, 106. The problem with Kant's conceptualisation is that it is borne out of the Euromodernist perspective of the possession of land as private property. Jennings, in critiquing this point, goes on to suggest quite insightfully that this amounts to a separation of land – inclusive of animals, agriculture and place – from humans with the result of conferring full identity and relations onto the human body. Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 50-53. Land as part of the social substrate of the human is severed. In which case, hospitality is commodified in terms of private entitlement and not released as shared grace. Private entitlement is negotiated as contractual, as conditional.

the neutrally communal desert space in the region of Gaza (Acts 8:26c). More about this later in chapter 4.

Yet, Luke imagines a hospitality that goes beyond the common cultural code of interactions. Shared grace is negotiated as spontaneous, as unconditional. This is evident as constitutive in Luke's 'Pentecostal conviviality'.²⁹⁹ It is a hospitality that is redefined by the Pentecostal experience of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. Hospitality in Acts is now practiced as sacrificial communal sharing (2:42-47). It is a way of life. The new converts dispossess themselves in entering a new *κοινωνία* (2:42). The entering in is inscribed by devotion (*προσκαρτεροῦντες*) to teaching of the apostles (*τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων*), fellowship (*τῇ κοινωνίᾳ*), sharing bread (*τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου*) and to prayers (*ταῖς προσευχαῖς*). This is a new (*ὁμοθυμαδὸν* – unanimous, 2:46) hospitality of pedagogical and psychagogical formation that endears (*ἔχοντες χάριν*) God's inclusive people of Israel to them (*πρὸς ὅλον τὸν λαόν*, 2:47).

1.7.1.2 'Connected Histories': A Constituent of 'Critical Conviviality'

While hospitality might define the relational nature of convivial interactions between people(s),³⁰⁰ Subrahmanyam's notion of 'connected histories', as alluded to earlier, characterises the temporal dimension of conviviality.³⁰¹ The fluid movement of peoples (*ἔθνη*) in the first century along the Afroasiatic strip by extension provided conduits of 'connected histories' between different ethnic groups and polities. These histories are often ignored within the Cartesian gaze of the Eurocentric reader because histories outside of the Graeco-Roman literary

²⁹⁹ Andy Lord, *Network Church: A Pentecostal Ecclesiology Shaped by Mission* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012), 200–25.

³⁰⁰ *ἔθνη*, the plural of *ἔθνος*, which is used in the book of Acts to denote peoples, otherwise known as Gentiles

³⁰¹ For an introduction to the notion of connected histories, see Subrahmanyam, 'Connected Histories', 735–62. For a more developed theorising of the notion of connected histories, see Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History*.

ideal are viewed as incommensurable with the European ideal type and thereby negligible as surplus to requirement.

‘Connected histories’, when critically engaged with, is an “openness to other histories and other societal trajectories”,³⁰² which serves to disrupt the implicit ethnic reasoning and decentre Graeco-Roman exceptionalism, which is commonly the single, dominant historical perspective of scholars on the text, and thereby reconstitute the narrative by providing new insights and understanding. Hence, in light of Sinaitic conviviality, where, for example, diasporic communities of the Mediterranean basin of Africa (Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Afroasiatic strip) traversed, a horizontal conviviality constitutive of hospitality and ‘connected histories’ might have served to disrupt – not dislodge – the Roman hegemonic control on policing peoples (ἔθνη). By undermining Rome, it undermined what Kathleen O’Brien Wicker calls the ‘historical colonization’, that is, “the political, economic and social domination” of one people over another.³⁰³ In effect, the ‘connected histories’ of the diasporic communities became to some extent shared histories.

³⁰² Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History: From the Tagus to the Ganges* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2. It is similar to the contrapuntal reading of R. S. Sugirtharajah, ‘The First, Second and Third Letters of John’, in *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*, eds. Fernando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 420, which itself is derived from Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), 59: “As we look back at the cultural archive, we begin to reread it not univocally but *contrapuntally*, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts”. Only ‘connected histories’ seeks to reconstitute the colonial history by taking seriously the related histories of connected peoples.

³⁰³ Kathleen O’Brien Wicker, ‘Teaching Feminist Biblical Studies in a Postcolonial Context’, in *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Introduction*, ed. by Elisabeth Schüssler Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997), 377. I have adapted the quote for the purposes of the Ethiopian eunuch story. The actual quote is, “the political, economic and social domination of people of less developed countries by those from more developed countries”.

1.7.2 ‘Critical Conviviality’ along the Vertical Axis - Spatial

The second axis of ‘critical conviviality’ is a vertical, hybridity sourced one, focusing on conviviality as a liminal lens of vivacity and openness. I am building this vertical convivial trope as a gaze with affect, which requires the reader to tap into their liminal experience of hybridity as a site of ‘in-betweenness’ (in the Bhabhaian sense of the word).³⁰⁴ Vertical conviviality is then an attempt to strive for awareness of the literary other, their agency and potential as grounded in the imagination of the writer, by accepting the limitations and liminality of oneself as reader.³⁰⁵ It thereby competes against the modernistic, Cartesian and “conditioned response of persons to the demands made upon them by others, and by a man-made environment”.³⁰⁶ Furthermore, it is a liminal, conjunctural quest from the perspective of a marginal, diasporic sensibility. This conjunctural, marginal, diasporic sensibility yields, psychically as alluded to earlier, an intimate

³⁰⁴ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 224. ‘In-betweenness’ is characterised by liminality and interstices of negotiated, contingent personhood. For a historical example of hybridity, see Shalini Puri, *The Caribbean Postcolonial: Social Equality, Post-Nationalism, and Cultural Hybridity* (New York; Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), where Caribbean hybridity is demonstrated, in its complexity, to be enshrined in or disavowed from cultural spaces and plays a role in notions of nationalism in the context of globalisation. Another example of this could be subaltern studies. For an application in the African-American context, see Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism: Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1988), 47, 57, where Gates posits the African-American rhetorical practice – i.e., homonymic pun – of signifyin(g) as a means of hybridising and thereby subverting the black/white binary.

³⁰⁵ When conceptuality as a state of imagining, creative thinking and understanding is vitalised, the liminally sourced vertical gaze of the reader is likely to respect the text as a cultural production, which assumes the reading act as a communal act. Cultural production, because the text is invariably produced and reproduced through layers of cultural meaning. Communal act, since we bring to the text various traditions shaped by our socialisation.

³⁰⁶ Illich, *Tools*, 24. As will be seen in sections 3.5.1.4.2 and 4.2.1.1, this vertical notion of conviviality constantly wages against attempts and predispositions towards separating people from their natural habitat – their environment of land, animals, livestock, vegetation, seasons, climate, water. An instrument of this divorce is the capitalistic logic, which effectively thrives on commodifying natural habitats, where the environment is propertied as private (as opposed to communal) possession. Capitalism fuelled the doctrine of discovery in the colonial divide-and-rule conquest of land, people and gods. See, for example, studies by Indigenous scholars on the doctrine of discovery-conquest of the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Canada in Robert J. Miller and others, *Discovering Indigenous Lands: The Doctrine of Discovery in the English Colonies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA, 2010).

gaze but one that could theoretically be constituted by Goto's notion of 'as if' and Burton's notion of the carnivalesque. Let us turn first to Goto's notion of 'as if'.

1.7.2.1 The Convivial Gaze of 'As If'

Luke as author is inviting his readers to enter the fictive, yet historical world of his plots. Courtney Goto coins such entering as playing 'as if'.³⁰⁷ Although speaking directly to 'play' as an activity, Goto's notion of 'as if' could be adopted in a literary sense since it speaks to conceptualisation (and, as will be seen, Bakhtin's notion of carnivalesque). In this way, play could be seen as a constitutive of vertical conviviality.³⁰⁸ Speaking of 'as if' as a means of conceptualisation, Goto avers that:

To play is to experience losing and finding oneself in engaging reality and one another 'as if', exploring freely a world of possibilities bounded by structure that facilitates relationship.

'As if' allows one to lose and find oneself when entering the fictive world of the narrative, since its engagement decentres one from "life as usual" and its subsequent disengagement allows one to register "a difference – of having been somewhere else".³⁰⁹ Then the Cartesian reader, as it were, would have abandoned herself in an alternative reality of race, class and gender – a fictive space of liminality. This egalitarian approach, of entering the fictive world of alterity as a means of divesting oneself of a superiority-ethnocentric complex, can provide a

³⁰⁷ Courtney T. Goto, *The Grace of Playing: Pedagogies for Leaning into God's New Creation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016), 16.

³⁰⁸ The notion of play as a constitutive of conviviality is not far from Illich's view, where he invokes Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologica* II, II, in the 186th question, article 5), for his "disciplined and creative playfulness", Illich, *Tools*, 13.

³⁰⁹ Goto, *The Grace of Playing*, 16. Goto invokes the etymological Greek root, *προσποιέομαι* (to pretend), to suggest further how 'as if' suspends certain realities of the "everyday ways of being". She continues, "Playing 'as if' is commonplace: male friends fight 'as if' they were going to hurt one another; readers believe 'as if' when they enter the fictional world of a novel; and a child plays with a cardboard box 'as if' it were a house. [...] Possibilities abound".

corrective for the gaze of whiteness, because it is in this sense that liminality enhances conviviality as a conceptually dialectical mode of being human. In which case, the convivial gaze is characterised by a multi-dimensional episteme constitutive of a rational (intellectual), material (body, land and space), affective (intimacy and engaging) and spiritual (movement and the dynamic spirit world) sensibility.³¹⁰

My point here is that there is more to the text than meets the Cartesian eye. To enable the conviviality of ‘as if’, a hermeneutic of embrace (and trust) is assumed. Here, I am appealing to Carlton John Turner’s hermeneutics of embrace, which calls for a deeper exploration of cultural influences.³¹¹ This psychically attitudinal conceptualising towards the agency of the Ethiopian eunuch is shared with the attendant cultural signifiers of the text, duly fleshed out and contextually appropriated.

1.7.2.2 The Convivial Gaze of ‘Carnavalesque’

The liminal notion of ‘as if’ also speaks to Bakhtin’s notion of carnivalesque, but as an act of subversion of power relations.³¹² Bakhtin invokes the seasonal practice of carnival as a performative dialogic of the peasant class to undermine the bourgeoisie through mimicry, catachresis, irony and the grotesque, and

³¹⁰ Viewing conviviality as a multi-dimensional episteme is useful when used as an analytical tool. See Joanna Overing and Alan Passes, ‘Introduction: Conviviality and the Opening of Amazonian Anthropology’, in *The Anthropology of Love and Anger: The Aesthetics of Conviviality in Native Amazonia*, ed. Joanna Overing and Alan Passes (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), 2. See also, preface, xiii.

³¹¹ Carlton John Turner, ‘Taming the Spirit? Widening the Pneumatological Gaze within African Caribbean Theological Discourse’, *BT* 13.2 (1 August 2015): 126–46. This necessitates operating relationally in liminal spaces, suspending a sense of self-consciousness and time in the reader while providing meaning. Self-consciousness, because the reader is immersed in the thought world of the plot; and time, because the focus of the experience of the reader is in that moment not in forensically seeking solutions but in capturing creatively and qualitatively this alternative thought world.

³¹² Carnavalesque is alluded to with respect to the Pentecostal experience of *glossolalia* in Virginia Burrus, ‘The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles’, in *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*, ed. by Fernando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 147. However, Burrus does not exploit its subversive worth.

thereby ushers into the public sphere the unofficial and forbidden spheres of life.³¹³ However, this dialectic between ‘as if’ and carnivalesque is probably best captured as a riposte to the racialised optic when coopting another notion of ‘play’.

Richard Burton, in critiquing Bakhtin’s carnivalesque, draws on carnival as a *continuous mode of play* – in contradistinction to Bakhtin’s temporary or seasonal mode of play – in Caribbean cultures.³¹⁴ He posits that Bakhtin’s carnivalesque has its basis on and is therefore restricted to a periodic two to three-day revel of carnival when the performers have a unique chance once a year to upstage their ‘lords’, before returning to their quotidian lives. However, in the Caribbean the revel of carnival is but a non-dualistic extension of everyday quotidian life, where in the very social transactions of everyday normal life there is perpetual playfulness – provocation – and play subversion, whether between insiders and between insiders and outsiders, whether between the sacred and the profane. This is the Caribbean ‘play culture’. Their two to three-day carnival then becomes a “magical mirror” and “ritual of intensification” of everyday life.³¹⁵ Predicating his observation on Peter Wilson’s, *Crab Antics*,³¹⁶ he posits that this has the effect of ‘reputation’, upheld generally by the men of that society, and ‘respectability’, derived from the original colonising British power and upheld by society’s institutions (which the women are generally keen to maintain), by

³¹³ M. M. Bakhtin, *Speech, Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson, trans. by Vern W. McGee, University of Texas Press Slavic Series, 8 (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986), 165–66.

³¹⁴ Richard D. E. Burton, *Afro-Creole: Power, Opposition, and Play in the Caribbean* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 156–220.

³¹⁵ Burton, *Afro-Creole*, 157.

³¹⁶ Peter J. Wilson, *Crab Antics: A Caribbean Case Study of the Conflict Between Reputation and Respectability* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1995). Here, by invoking the antics of crabs in a bucket, Wilson critically describes how social stratification is maintained homeostatically in the Caribbean island of Providentia so that no one gets above their station.

dialectically playing against each other. The achieved 'reputation', whether gained through internally communal banter, joshing or one-upmanship, serves as a counter-hegemonic tactic of subversion of the established 'respectability'.³¹⁷

It is the spirit of Burton's notion of carnivalesque that characterises vertical conviviality as a counter-hegemonic literary tactic of subversion, as a way of reading against, a way of looking, a way of being. Its mode is playful, creative and liberatory in the sense that its ocular vision provokes the spirit of the narrative, engaging the sociocultural agency of its characters and plot by countering the constrictive, race-thinking gaze of whiteness. In this way, communal language is both disruptive and redemptive, and both through double-consciousness.

Disruptive, because the mimicry, irony and hybridity of language disrupts the dominant gaze of whiteness; and redemptive, because the 'emergent' language opens up new vistas of understanding that were hitherto hidden. Yet, these characteristics are mediated through double-consciousness – in that we are dealing with power relations – which itself is characterised by the Burtonian ontological locus of play. The liminal space is dialectically in-between, yet in another sense, transcendentally beyond, the racialised black and white binary. This renders the raced figure of any literature slippery, malleable, flexible, ambiguous, potential, and consequently unfixing and unhousing to the Cartesian gaze.³¹⁸

In sum, the 'critical convivial' gaze is not a protective or defensive gaze; it is open and anticipative of surprise and promise. It is about wanting to bridge a historical and social gap of two thousand years and two thousand miles that anticipates opening up the unexpected in light of neo-colonial, normative readings. This spatial difference and temporal distance are not frightening but welcoming. Like

³¹⁷ Burton, *Afro-Creole*, 158–60.

³¹⁸ It is quite possible that given the way the Holy Spirit proceeds in Acts, it too dwells in these proximities.

the risqué humour of Burton's 'reputation' group, the convivial gaze is transgressive yet instructive as part of an emancipatory project. 'Critical conviviality' can then be conceptually a spatial and temporal site where collectivist cosmopolitan activity is habituated through hospitable modes of behaviour.³¹⁹ As a literary tool, it will be utilised to make sense of: one, positioning the author of Acts as a diasporic Jew with cosmopolitan and anti/postcolonial sensibilities; two, the literary character of Acts, its two-recensions tradition and, the politics and purpose of its texts; three, a perspective of what the ethnoreligious landscape of first century Judaism was, inclusive of the politics of Jewishness and identity and of people's relationship to the land in first century antiquity; and, four (in the next chapter), on the basis of the foregoing three, the literary and rhetorical signifiers within the Ethiopian eunuch's story that give rise to the conceptual tropes of pilgrimage and representation.

Devoid of the two dimensional convivial hermeneutic, the biblical studies canon of the past 150 years will insist on the main that the Ethiopian eunuch cannot be a Jew. I argue that theirs is a constrictive Cartesian gaze bereft of conviviality.

1.7.2.3 'Critical Conviviality' vs. Industrial Productivity: An Impedance

Illich posits the tool of conviviality in opposition to the Euromodernity tool of "industrial productivity".³²⁰ Industrial productivity refers to non-human machines designed to produce goods for commodification, as opposed to producing relationships. This can be nuanced further by suggesting that the type of conviviality that is absent with respect to industrial productivity is the vertical

³¹⁹ Although appealing to the Ottoman Empire, Ulrike Freitag demonstrates the conceptual and historical complementarity between cosmopolitanism and conviviality, where the former predominantly refers to ethnoreligious interactions between elites, and the latter to the quotidian interactions between different people irrespective of their origin. Ulrike Freitag, "Cosmopolitanism" and "Conviviality"? Some Conceptual Considerations Concerning the Late Ottoman Empire', *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 17.4 (2014): 375-91.

³²⁰ Illich, *Tools*, 23.

conviviality. Then industrial productivity is the dominant tool operative within an economy of knowledge production and reproduction within the academy.³²¹ When institutionalised it only serves to reproduce a metanarrative that would merely perpetuate the transmission of rigid, static, immutable knowledge. I see the Cartesian gaze as analogous to the arbitrariness of industrial productivity. It is an ‘academic’ gaze bereft of conviviality. It is the gaze that fixes and fixates the disembodied subjectivity of the text.

The major exegetical tool of the Cartesian gaze within biblical studies is still the historical-critical method,³²² despite its demise being prophesied as early as 1974.³²³ Given its proclivities towards rationalism, objectivism, positivism, Eurocentric realism, universalism and individualism it seems that its bureaucratic exegetical outcomes tend towards industrial productivity within the academy.³²⁴

³²¹ Illich, *Tools*, 20–1.

³²² Roy A. Harrisville, *Pandora’s Box Opened: An Examination and Defense of Historical-Critical Method and Its Master Practitioners* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014).

³²³ Gerhard Maier, *The End of the Historical-Critical Method* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2001). For a discussion on the future of the historical-critical method, see of last chapter of, David R. Law, *The Historical-Critical Method: A Guide for the Perplexed* (T&T Clark International, 2012), 217–37. Cf. Larry Hurtado’s blog posts exchange with James Crossley – Larry W. Hurtado, ‘Tools of the Trade’, *Larry Hurtado’s Blog*, 2011 <<https://larryhurtado.wordpress.com/2011/09/04/tools-of-the-trade/>>; Larry W. Hurtado, ‘Tools of the Trade . . . Encore’, *Larry Hurtado’s Blog*, 2011 <<https://larryhurtado.wordpress.com/2011/09/05/tools-of-the-trade-encore/>>; James G. Crossley, ‘Languages, Humanities and a New Testament PhD’, *Sheffield Biblical Studies*, 2011 <<https://sheffieldbiblicalstudies.wordpress.com/2011/09/07/languages-humanities-ntphd/>>; Larry W. Hurtado, ‘Languages, Theories, Approaches’, *Larry Hurtado’s Blog*, 2011 <<https://larryhurtado.wordpress.com/2011/09/08/languages-theories-approaches/>>; James G. Crossley, ‘More on Widening the Definition of NT Studies’, *Sheffield Biblical Studies*, 2011 <<https://sheffieldbiblicalstudies.wordpress.com/2011/09/08/more-on-widening-the-definition-of-nt-studies/>>; Larry W. Hurtado, ‘NT Research Languages: Encore’, *Larry Hurtado’s Blog*, 2011 <<https://larryhurtado.wordpress.com/2011/09/27/nt-research-languages-encore/>>. See further Larry W. Hurtado, ‘On Diversity, Competence, and Coherence in New Testament Studies: A Modest Response to Crossley’s “Immodest Proposal”’, *Relegere*, 2 (2012): 153–77; James G. Crossley, ‘An Immodest Proposal for Biblical Studies’, *Relegere: Studies in Religion and Reception*, 2.1 (2012): 153–77. For another critique of Hurtado’s argument, see Michael Sandford, ‘On the Past and Future of New Testament Studies: A Response to Larry Hurtado’, *Relegere: Studies in Religion and Reception*, 4.2 (2015): 229–240. For an excellent critique of the historical-critical from a postcolonial perspective, see *Her Master’s Tools? Feminist and Postcolonial Engagements of Historical-Critical Discourse*, ed. by Caroline Vander Stichele and Todd C. Penner (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2005).

³²⁴ It is worth mentioning that the Cartesian gaze is a falsification gaze primarily because it is preoccupied with a hermeneutic of suspicion in the clinicalisation (or historicity) sense of the word. Because of this, it has

The effect of its focus on obtaining the ‘truth’ of the text as *exact facts* is to clinicalise the text, resulting in the complete separation of the sacred from the secular, the supernatural from the natural, the spirit from the body, and the culture from the literature – a disembodied text. The text then becomes the object of arbitrariness. Ultimately, epistemic violence is inflicted not only on a literary subject like the Ethiopian eunuch by orientalisising him as the qualitatively Other but also on other readerships who might identify with his fluid identity, even if symbolically.

The discourse needs then to be further inflected by identifying the power dynamics which are very much part of the materiality of the system of knowledge production.³²⁵ As such, the arbitrary application of historical criticism, which is itself inflected by a Cartesian epistemology,³²⁶ cannot be allowed to play the ‘missionary’ in attempting to civilise the text, unwittingly or not.³²⁷ In effect, in rehabilitating the story of the Ethiopian Eunuch, one cannot afford either to

become the hermeneutics of cynicism within biblical studies, closing its door to any emancipatory prospect.

³²⁵ It will assert that the formation of the exegete’s critique within the academy cannot be disarticulated from its yoke to the materiality of knowledge production. It is my contention that any gaze or conceptualisation merely intent upon producing a cultural identity of the Ethiopian eunuch, for example, exclusive of the more important question of seeking to unravel the politics of his identity is culpable of neocolonialism (in the sense of Nkrumah’s definition). See Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1965). As the title of his book suggests, Nkrumah saw neocolonialism as the last stage of imperialism. For an in-depth discussion and differentiation of the concepts of colonialism, imperialism, neocolonialism, and postcolonialism, see Young, *Postcolonialism: Historical*, 13–70. The question of the materiality of knowledge production is a question of the political ramifications, for example, of the Ethiopian eunuch’s constructed identity, since different reading communities are affected by these. While, on the one hand, this could prove somewhat productive, it has to be borne in mind that such readings could be obstructive when teleologically tied to identity politics – e.g., communities could be coopted or excluded by the process.

³²⁶ Runesson, *Exegesis in the Making*, 25–8.

³²⁷ It is in this way for example that Gauri Viswanathan, in his classic essay, ‘The Beginnings of English Literary Study in British India’, masterfully demonstrates how in India the politics of knowledge production strategically promoted the status of the English missionary away from the violent tormentor of his forebears to the now idealised, tranquilised figure of the statesman by investing him with sacred authority in English texts and thereby distancing the reality of materialist violence from the colonised imagination. See Gauri Viswanathan, ‘The Beginnings of English Literary Study in British India’, *Oxford Literary Review*, 9 (1987): 2–26. In this way the missionary was positioned as the aseptically innocent altruist – unsullied by the past – who treated the once victims as born-again converts divested of their historical baggage. The power dynamic, in this case, is then lodged in the denial (or historical amnesia) of the past.

reduce the new emergence of a born-again African Hebrew who goes on his way rejoicing to a superficial holy dance,³²⁸ or even to recognise him simply as a Jewish diasporic African man. The modern exegete, especially of the ‘missionary’ ilk, has to keep in mind the effects of the tortured violence Eurocentric knowledge production has played on ‘dark skinned’ characters such as the Ethiopian eunuch, and thereby read sensitively against such a velocity of sedimented race thinking.

This applies to the ‘standard’ commentaries that the guild recognises, and which form the core of the disciplinary canon to fulfil the demands of industrial productivity. The politics of their production as ‘merely’ a resource, a standard reference, an exegetical tool that need not be studied in their own terms as a genre, affects a compliant reading position. These have a wide influence in the discipline in that they assume, to quote Gérard Genette, “somewhat the privilege of the ‘omniscient’ narrator”.³²⁹ In effect, their ‘scientific’ purview provides as a genre a genealogical tradition, which itself provides, to quote Derrida (though he was referring to something else), “a supplementary objectification of another order”.³³⁰ Nevertheless, as in line with the missionary analogy above, one must resist the bureaucratic, hegemonic monopoly of this order.

³²⁸ The Ethiopian eunuch going on his way rejoicing is often characterized as the emotionally charged, primitive holy dance of native Africans. See an example of this in the journal entry of the Church Missionary Society, *Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East* (London: Church Missionary House, 1845), 16:34. Buell further argues that the application of ‘historical criticism’ effectively reinforced racial and social positions in the “home context” of the global North – Buell, “Anachronistic Whiteness,” 156–158. I would argue moreover that in this sense, ‘historical criticism’ serves as a socio-cultural heuristic tool that reflects a Cartesian episteme celebrated by the global North.

³²⁹ Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 130. The emphasis is Genette’s.

³³⁰ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 125.

1.8 Caution

Postcoloniality as an emancipatory discipline does not naturally sit comfortably with the subjects it hopes to protect. There are several reasons for this: One, the language of postcolonial studies is the sophisticated language of the academy – a small, select group of professionals with highly specialised knowledge who ostensibly talk to themselves.³³¹ While this dissertation is a critique, which intervenes in the academy, and so has to engage in the language of the academy, it will endeavour to address issues that pertain to community, especially in its reflection. Two, some scholars, such as Arif Dirlik, chide postcolonial theorists as ‘third world’ scholars-cum-good as first world scholars with all its pretensions.³³² In other words, and with respect to this dissertation, however part of the academy the postcolonial critic is, her work will always remain the same: to interrogate and displace Eurocentrism and anti-blackness in biblical studies.³³³

³³¹ Camille Isaacs, “‘Reports of My Death Are Greatly Exaggerated’: Postcolonial Theory and the Politics of Postcoloniality” (Paper presented at the Politics of Postcoloniality: Contexts and Conflicts Conference, ARIEL, Hamilton, McMaster University, October 2003), 233–238, addresses the disconnect between the academy and the changing world. Isaacs opines that we need to “deal concretely with the materiality of the former colonized people’s lives” and not “obscure discussions of theory”, (pp. 234–5). A typical example of “obscure discussions of theory” is found in Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture*, 91,: “If, for a while, the ruse of desire is calculable for the uses of discipline soon the repetition of guilt, justification, pseudo-scientific theories, superstition, spurious authorities, and classifications can be seen as the desperate effort to “normalize” formally the disturbance of a discourse of splitting that violates the rational, enlightened claims of its enunciatory modality”. Bhabha’s text is replete with dense language like this and suffers the criticism of being somewhat impenetrable.

³³² Arif Dirlik, ‘The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism’, *Critical Inquiry* 20 (1994): 329. However, strong ripostes have come from the likes of Leela Gandhi, who, admitting that “there is more to politics than theory”, writes: “If the postcolonial intellectual has a political vocation, then it inheres, as we have been arguing, in a commitment to facilitate a democratic dialogue between the Western and non-Western academies, and in so doing, to think a way out of the epistemological violence of the colonial encounter” Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 63.

³³³ Nevertheless, the independent work of the postcolonial critic is compounded by the fact that while critiquing the institution they are financially dependent on it. Cornel West calls this a double bind: Cornel West, ‘The New Cultural Politics of Difference’, *October* 53 (1990): 94.

A third charge levelled at postcolonial theorists, particularly those of the strategic essentialism and transcultural hybridity model in Samuel's classification,³³⁴ is the interminable, interstitial ambivalence that seem to characterise all (post)colonial transactions – between the colonial and colonised.³³⁵ Construing the transactions in terms of performativity, however, should substantiate the theory. In other words, the theory is merely descriptive of the performativity.³³⁶

A fourth and final charge levelled at postcolonial theory is that it has tended to regard in its analysis 'high' culture in neglect of 'low' culture, buying into the aloofness of much of what characterised cultural studies. Some of this is due in part to the type of histories it has critiqued where documentation has been by the educated for the educated, creating a knowledge production that primarily serves the interests of the educated. This is a classist critique. It is however, where the

³³⁴ Examples of strategic essentialism and transcultural hybridity model are: Samuel, *A Postcolonial Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*; Mayra Rivera, 'Ghostly Encounters: Spirits, Memory, and the Holy Ghost', in *Planetary Loves: Spivak, Postcoloniality, and Theology*, eds. Stephen D. Moore and Mayra Rivera (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 118–35; Tom Thatcher and Stephen D. Moore, *Anatomies of Narrative Criticism: The Past, Present, and Futures of the Fourth Gospel as Literature* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2008).

³³⁵ Benita Parry is notable among the critics charging that the disconnect between the semiotic idealism (of a Bhabha) and the materiality of what is happening on the ground is virtually irreconcilable in the abstractions. See Parry, 'Signs of Our Times'. Earlier, Benita Parry associated this theoretical turn with the appointment of postcolonial studies to English departments of universities: Benita Parry, 'At the Margins of Postcolonial Studies: Part 1', in *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004), 4–5. Colin Sparks alludes to this in terms of postcolonial studies being subsumed within the academy under literary studies whilst making the larger observation that though postcolonial studies probably needed to curb its deterministic usage of Marxism, to shed the discipline altogether of its Marxist moorings is a "fundamentally regressive step": Colin Sparks, 'Stuart Hall, Cultural Studies and Marxism', in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, eds. Kuan-Hsing Chen and David Morley (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), 98–9. Jenny Sharpe points out that the term 'postcolonial' has greater currency in imperialist centres of the global North than in the former colonies of the global South. Sharpe, 'Postcolonial Studies in the House of US Multiculturalism', 114.

³³⁶ Or, in the words of Slemon: "We need to remember that resistances to colonialist power always find material presence at the level of the local, and so the research and training we carry out in the field of post-colonialism, whatever else it does, must always find ways to address the local, if only on the order of material applications" Stephen Slemon, 'The Scramble for Post-Colonialism [1994]', in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 52. Interminable, interstitial ambivalence, which leads to a never-ending deferment of meaning, can render the historical act as fading, even insignificant. Postcolonial criticism by definition should be grounded in the materiality of history if it were to remain relevant to the reader.

work of Stuart Hall is meaningful, since his work is inexorably aimed at the marginalised, disenfranchised and working class of which black people are disproportionately highly represented.

1.9 Summary

Ancient biblical literature is wrapped up in a mystical, spirit world of collectivist sensibility. Cultural studies, however, can open up epistemological spaces to account for the cultural gap that distances racialised and present-day readings of it. The genealogical momentum of postcolonial theory was thought to have inflected a number of conjunctural epistemes enabling a re-casting of, for example, geopolitical regions such as the Middle East or even ANE for the preferred Afroasiatic region. In line with this approach, two composite, epistemological signifiers were identified: whiteness and ‘critical conviviality’.

Whiteness is set to deconstruct successive readerships of the Ethiopian eunuch and his story. It, like the Fanonian gaze, is a Cartesian performative act.³³⁷ A hermeneutic of suspicion with respect to whiteness would identify and foreground the blind spots of the discourse or, to use Polanyi’s language as adopted by Kuhn, bring to the surface the ‘tacit knowledge’ collectively assumed and make it visible for deconstruction.³³⁸ The parallel, yet anti-current elenchus,

³³⁷ The notion of the ‘Fanonian gaze’, a dialectic gaze, is derived from Stuart Hall’s reading of Fanon in Stuart Hall, ‘The After-Life of Frantz Fanon: Why Fanon? Why Now? Why Black Skin, White Masks?’, in *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*, ed. Alan Read (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1996), 18. Bhabha further develops the idea in terms of the objectified scopic drive where the gaze, which represents pleasure in seeing and in universalisation, passes over epidermalisation. This eventualises into a mirror stage where the colonial’s gaze is returned by the colonised, and (s)he – the coloniser – consequently experiences traces of loss. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 76–81.

³³⁸ Polanyi first coined the phrase, ‘tacit knowledge’ in Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), 4, which Kuhn adopted in Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 44, as “knowledge that is acquired through practice and that cannot be articulated explicitly”. Although for different reasons, a definition of a hermeneutic of suspicion as advanced by Rita Felski is useful when considering whiteness as the object (and agency) of scrutiny: “The ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’ is the name usually bestowed on this technique of

‘critical conviviality’, emerged to produce as a creative trope for reconstructing an alternative plausible reading of the Ethiopian eunuch, which further interrogates and disrupts past and existing conceptualities. Characterised by ‘collectivist hospitality’ and ‘connected histories’, it is constructed to eviscerate the epistemological hegemony of whiteness and debunk its Cartesian inevitability.

The key thing to note is that the enrolment of cultural studies to make sense of the question, ‘why cannot the Ethiopian eunuch be imaged as a fully-fledged Jew?’, is not to negate the historicisation of the question but to open up the politics of ignorance, obfuscation and knowledge production of his ethnoreligious identity. In which case, the dissertation will strategically advance by (re-)historicising the early reception history and, later, the literary text of Acts 8:26-40 of the Ethiopian eunuch’s ethnoreligious identity, while simultaneously exposing through the impulse of postcolonial criticism – specifically whiteness and ‘critical conviviality’ – how racialised, Cartesian interests conceptually obfuscate and deny him a plausible Jewish identity. Thus, the critical cultural readings of the historicisation undertakings will lay bare the structural, imperial gaze, demonstrating that the Ethiopian eunuch can indeed be tenably imaged as a fully-fledged Jew.

Whiteness will now be adopted in Part 1 of the dissertation to deconstruct successive early readings of the Ethiopian eunuch. ‘Critical conviviality’ will follow in Part 2 of the dissertation to reconstruct and reimagine Luke’s depiction of the Ethiopian eunuch.

reading texts against the grain and between the lines, of cataloging their omissions and laying bare their contradictions, of rubbing in what they fail to know and cannot represent”, Rita Felski, ‘Context Stinks!’, *New Literary History* 42.4 (2011): 574.

Chapter 2

2 THE WHITENING OF THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH: THE POLITICS OF JEWISH AND GRAECO-GENTILE IDENTITIES WITHIN THE PATRISTIC CORPUS

*“But what on earth is whiteness that one should
so desire it?” Then always, somehow, some way,
silently but clearly, I am given to understand that
whiteness is the ownership of the earth forever
and ever, Amen!*

–W.E.B. Du Bois³³⁹

2.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to examine how the ethnoreligious agency of the Ethiopian eunuch was treated by his initial reception readership, namely the Church Fathers, between the second and sixth centuries. It makes the general point that over the course of this time the Ethiopian eunuch did not persist as a Jew because the ‘ideal type’ against which he was benchmarked, shifted from a Jewish type³⁴⁰ to a ‘Graeco-Gentile type’, underwritten by the discursive politics of the *Adversus Judaeos* trope. His black body in time was ideologically inscribed and expropriated as a ‘white’ Graeco-Gentile. This shift to a Graeco-Roman ‘ideal type’ did not come before the mid-to-late second century. In which case, it is

³³⁹ Du Bois, *Darkwater*, 16.

³⁴⁰ The Jewish type would have reflected the broad pool of Second Temple Jewish identities inclusive of Palestinian, diasporic, Pharisee, Sadducee, Zealot, Essene, Godfearer, proselyte, Nazarene and the emergent post-70s rabbinic identities. It would follow, then, that the Jewish ‘Christian’ identity was initially the ideal type. See Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976). The arguments of accusations and counteraccusations that we witness – whether in the gospels or letters, and whether of a diatribe nature – were, I submit, for internal digest. It was an intra-Jewish matter. It was an attempt to iron out the true ideal type.

hardly likely that this ‘ideal type’ was Luke’s ethnoreligious benchmark for asserting the nature of The Way³⁴¹ in Acts.³⁴² Instead, the likes of the Apostle Paul and his contemporaries were arguably articulating their theology within an intra-Jewish context.³⁴³

My point is that motivations for the Ethiopian eunuch to be necessarily idealised as a Graeco-Roman convert during the writing of Acts are not apparent. It is after the writing of Acts – even if considered a late composition (early second century) – that the displacement of the Jewish ideal type by the Church Fathers as a function of identity politics took place, giving way to the discursive mobilisation

³⁴¹ The nomenclature, The Way, is the preferred pre-Christian terminology, which is cited in Acts 9:2 (τινας [...] τοῦ ὁδοῦ ὄντας, “anyone belonging to The Way”; cf. Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22; 28:22; cf. 18:25–26). This group would have been primarily made up of Afroasiatic – Hebrew and Hellenist Jewish – converts (cf. 6:1), whether Palestinian or diasporic (cf. 9:29, 11:30). James Dunn suggests that the image, ἡ ὁδός (the way), is evocative of “the Hebrew idiom of conduct as walking (*hālak*) [הלך] along a path”. See, James D. G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem*, Christianity in the Making, 3 vols (Cambridge; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 2:13–4.

³⁴² The Graeco-Gentile type came later in the century. I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1971), 54. Marshall, appealing to the possible influence of the Maccabean historian’s influence on Luke’s volumes, suggests that Luke’s audience was most likely Jewish. See also an excellent argument for Luke as an apologetic to a Jewish-centred audience: Loveday Alexander, *Acts in Its Ancient Literary Context: A Classicist Looks at the Acts of the Apostles* (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2005), 183–206. For an argument in favour of Acts resembling Jewish historiography see Samson Uytanlet, *Luke-Acts and Jewish Historiography: A Study on the Theology, Literature, and Ideology of Luke-Acts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014). For the pattern of Luke’s reaching from within Judaism to other groups, see Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission: Paul and the Early Church*, 2 vols (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP, 2004), 2:1294–1301. For different kinds of Judaisms, see *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era*, eds. Jacob Neusner, William Scott Green, and Ernest S. Frerichs (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Philip Esler did much to shift the popular notion that Luke’s audience was by far predominantly a Gentile one in Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*, 31–45. For the authoritative, influential argument in favour of a predominately Gentile audience, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AB, 28, 1st ed., 2 vols (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 1:57–9. Sean Adams persuasively puts forward the notion that the audience of Acts is in any case an insider one even though its genre is a collection of biographies called collected biography: Sean A. Adams, *The Genre of Acts and Collected Biography*, SNTSMS 156 (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

³⁴³ Denise Kimber Buell, ‘Challenges and Strategies for Speaking about Ethnicity in the New Testament and New Testament Studies’, *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok* 79 (2014): 37. See further, the five essays in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. by Mark Brett (Boston: Brill, 2002), 171–294.: David Sim, “Christianity and Ethnicity in the Gospel of Matthew” (171–96); John M. G. Barclay, “Neither Jew nor Greek’: Multiculturalism and the New Perspective on Paul” (197–214); Philip F. Esler, “Group Boundaries and Intergroup Conflict in Galatians: A New Reading of Gal. 5:13–6:10” (215–40); Reinhard Feldmeier, “The ‘Nation’ of Strangers: Social Contempt and its Theological Interpretation in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity” (241–70); Wolfgang Stegemann, “Antisemitic and Racist Prejudices in Titus 1:10–16” (271–94).

of the Graeco-Gentile ideal type aided and abetted by the advancement of the *Adversus Judaeos* tradition.

Likewise, the ‘parting of the ways’ between Judaism and Christianity³⁴⁴ did not happen until after the writing of Acts.³⁴⁵ To view this chronologically, the seeds of a potentially material partitioning of Judaism and Christianity were largely sown during the apostolic times of the first century. By the second century, the time of the emergence of the Church Fathers, the tension began to percolate in some quarters.³⁴⁶ Vitally, the fault lines were beginning to show and were

³⁴⁴ It should be borne in mind that ‘Christianity’ as an identity label was probably derived from its first cited cognate, ‘Christians’, in Acts 11:26 (cf. 26:28), which itself was constructed by others as a pejorative jibe but in turn was later owned and normalised by Christians themselves. An example of later Christians reclaiming the word or notion of ‘Christian/Christianity’, divesting it of its pejorative power and reinvesting it with honour, can be seen in the writings of Theophilus of Antioch (d. 183/185), Theophilus, *Ad Autolyicum*, trans. by Robert M. Grant (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), Book I, chap. 12. Dunn further argues that the term Christianity probably first emerged as meaning “not Judaism” – see James D. G. Dunn, *Neither Jew nor Greek: Christianity in the Making*, Christianity in the Making, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 3:13.

³⁴⁵ That is not to say that a religio-cultural fault line is not discernible as a rift between Jewish Christians and Graeco-Gentile Christians much earlier. Such an analysis must, however, be cautiously engaged with. See Philip S Alexander, “‘The Parting of the Ways’ from the Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism”, in *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways AD70 to 135*, ed. by James D. G. Dunn (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 1. In any case, neither the Jesus Way Jews nor the Jesus Way Graeco-Gentiles were a homogenous, Torah-observant or antinomian group, respectively. See Raymond Edward Brown, ‘Not Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity but Types of Jewish/Gentile Christianity’, *CBQ* 45.1 (1983): 74–79.

³⁴⁶ Some argue that the simmering tension took a decisive turn in the year 70. See, for example, W. H. C. Frend, *The Early Church: From the Beginnings to 461*, 4th ed. (London: SCM Press, 2012), who posits that the ‘Christian’ flight to Pella from Jerusalem brought their relationship with Jews ‘beyond repair’ because they did not stand up to the Romans (pp. 33–4). Daniel Boyarin demonstrates conclusively, however, that this could not be the case since in equal measure the Rabbi Yohanan fled to Yavneh about the same time and did so with no charge of being a traitor. If he were no traitor, then neither could the ‘Christian’ flight to Pella be viewed in the same way. Cf. Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 136, n. 19. In any case, the Judaeans were not exiled as such at this time, as persuasively argued by Chaim Milikowsky. A significant number of them simply left as politically subjugated subjects. The key to Milikowsky’s point is that the notion of ‘exile’ as used in the Tannaitic sources of the second to third centuries had the connotation of being politically subjugated not of being driven from one’s land. See, Chaim Milikowsky, ‘Notions of Exile, Subjugation, and Return in Rabbinic Literature’, in *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions*, ed. by James Scott (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1997), 265–96. Moreover, Israel Yuval goes on to demonstrate that the two instances of Jewish migration from the Land of Israel – after the 132–135 Bar Kokhba revolt and after the 70 Temple destruction – went on to be conflated as an exilic phenomenon in the imagination of both Christians and rabbinic Jews in late antiquity and the Middle Ages, though for different reasons. See, Israel Jacob Yuval, ‘The Myth of the Jewish Exile from the Land of Israel: A Demonstration of Irenic Scholarship’, *Common Knowledge* 12.1 (2006): 16–33. The Christians invented the exilic myth as a fulfilment of biblical prophecy (such as Isaiah 1:7), thereby asserting their supersessionism. The Jewish invention stemmed from the fourth

aggravated by the likes of Marcion (early to mid-second century), who was onerous about Christianity severing links with its Judaic roots.³⁴⁷ In fact, one could argue, as does Daniel Boyarin, that the border between Christianity and (the now Rabbinic) Judaism was “constructed out of acts of discursive (and too often actual) violence, especially acts of violence against the heretics who embody the instability of [the protagonist’s] constructed essences”.³⁴⁸ Their respective discursive strategies, aimed at each other, helped to reinforce prejudices and hostility. Both sides were antagonistically culpable in bringing about the parting of the ways,³⁴⁹ for as long as it took, not just one side. But their religious identities were probably more than likely inflected and conflicted by hybridity and overlapping. The post-canonical, formative Jewish and Christian texts seem to reflect a measure of conviviality on the ground between these groups than their authors would care to admit. Hence, at times, the strident and polarising nature of the patristic texts.³⁵⁰ Indeed, there were other forces beyond theology

century Constantinian Christianisation of the ‘Land of Israel’ (i.e., the whole region of the Afroasiatic strip), which was effectively a usurpation their land.

³⁴⁷ For a reconstruction of the text of Marcion’s gospel, see Dieter T. Roth, *The Text of Marcion’s Gospel* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015). For a more comprehensive view of his views vis-à-vis his detractors in light of the development of heresiology as a discipline, see Judith M. Lieu, *Marcion and the Making of a Heretic: God and Scripture in the Second Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

³⁴⁸ Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia, PN: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), xiv. Boyarin’s point is that the mutual efforts by the burgeoning second century Christian writers and Rabbis to distinguish between their respective Christian and Jewish identities created heresiology as a discursive tool to alienate ‘the Other’ and reify nontransgressive borders between their religions.

³⁴⁹ As such, the phrase, ‘the parting of the ways’, which is used for imagining the development of early Christianity, is problematic. It gives the false heuristic notion that Judaism and Christianity parted “with a clarity that it (falsely) both presupposes and promises” – Paula Fredriksen, ‘How Later Contexts Affect Pauline Content, or: Retrospect Is the Mother of Anachronism’, in *Jews and Christians in the First and Second Centuries: How to Write Their History*, ed. by Peter J. Tomson and Joshua J. Schwartz (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2014), 48.

³⁵⁰ See Daniel Boyarin and Virginia Burrus, ‘Hybridity as Subversion of Orthodoxy? Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity’, *Social Compass* 52.4 (2005): 431–41. The contributors to the volume, *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, largely concur that it is nigh impossible to speak of two distinct and fully formed religions before the fourth and fifth centuries. This is primarily because “while some vehemently asserted the separation of ‘Judaism’ and ‘Christianity’, others ignored their efforts, and still others resisted them.” – *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed (Tübingen:

inclusive of race, politics, sociality and geography as signified by the *Adversus Judaeos* trope.

Lawrence's text, 'The History of the Interpretation of Acts 8:26-40 by the Church Fathers Prior to the Fall of Rome', traces the catechetical function of the doctrine of baptism in the Church Fathers but seems to be oblivious to the presence and efficacy of the *Adversus Judaeos* trope. Otherwise the composite advancement of the *Adversus Judaeos* trope could have explained how the story underwent a shift from agency identity to doctrinal functionality: i.e., from whom and for whom the Ethiopian eunuch was as an instrument of Jewish tradition, to what he was as a function of the literary pericope viewed theologically. In effect, he was colonised in successive readings as evidence for the theological analytics of the doctrine of baptism. Consequently, Lawrence's text accepts *prima facie* Eusebius's reading that the African eunuch "was the first Gentile to receive Christian baptism".³⁵¹ What is missed, as will be demonstrated when examining the Patristic writings, is how the ethnoreligious identity of the Ethiopian eunuch appeared to have become essentialised as a Graeco-Gentile by the Church Fathers by means of the discursive strategy of ethnic reasoning.

Mohr Siebeck, 2003), xii. Dunn concedes, in the final volume of his magisterial history of Christian origins, that the tension between the Hebrew and Hellenist Jews, while periodically rising to the literary surface of Acts, did not really begin to develop before post-70 Rabbinic Judaism and 'Christianity'. Cf. James D. G. Dunn, *Neither Jew nor Greek: A Contested Identity*, Christianity in the Making, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 3:598–672. In his previous volume, Dunn seems to see an ideological schism between the Hellenists and the Hebrews. Hence, he concludes that the parting of the ways emerged from a split between Hellenist Christianity and Judaeo-Christianity. See Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem*, 2:84, 242–9. Walton supports the view that there was no ideological split. See Steve Walton, 'How Mighty a Minority Were the Hellenists?', in *Earliest Christian History: History, Literature & Theology*, ed. by Michael F. Bird and Jason Maston, WUNT, 2/320 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 305–28.

³⁵¹ Lawrence, 'Interpretation by the Church Fathers', ii. Lawrence goes on to examine for their baptism-doctrinal worth the following Church Fathers: Irenaeus (p. 8), Tertullian (pp. 9–11, 26–7), Pontius (pp. 11–5, 27–9), Basil (pp. 15–6), Gregory Nazianzen (pp. 16–7, 34–5, 49–50), John Chrysostom (pp. 17–9, 43–5), Jerome (pp. 29–32), Augustine (pp. 19–22, 32–4, 35–6), Eusebius (pp. 38–9), Jerome (pp. 39–42), *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* (pp. 43–6), and Ephraim Syrus (pp. 47–9).

As indicated in the Introduction, the mode of assembling is employed as a method for determining the ‘conjunctural shifts’ of ethnic reasoning with regards to the first six centuries of commentaries on the Ethiopian eunuch.³⁵² They are negotiated and contested spaces, not predetermined. The method of assembling will therefore seek to track the ethnoreligious conjunctures of the Ethiopian eunuch vis-à-vis the Patristic writings as ‘problem-spaces’, where their articulations frame similar questions, which can be worked through “within the same epistemological, political, or aesthetic horizon”³⁵³ of the *Adversus Judaeos* trope. It will demonstrate that in these conjunctural moments, the root of the discursive strategy for justifying the emergent Graeco-Gentile identity of the Ethiopian eunuch was in its alignment with a putative Hellenistic origin. Hence, a conjunctural shift from a Jewish ideal type to a Hellenistic one was born and proved indispensable to forming an ideological identity of purity and originarity for Graeco-Gentile Christianity. To demonstrate these shifts, the first of the twin literary tropes, whiteness (the other being ‘critical conviviality’), is commandeered in this chapter, effectively concentrating our attention on the slippery ethnoreligious conceptualities of the early readerships of the Ethiopian eunuch’s story.

³⁵² It would be impossible to measure the sweep of conjunctures in the Patristic reception history of the Ethiopian eunuch, even though marking time off conveniently in terms of centuries (CE) – 100-199, 200-299, 300-399 etc. – gives the illusion of “a sequential form and an imaginary unity they never possessed”. Stuart Hall, ‘Assembling the 1980s’, 4. Yet it is possible, as Hall avers, to see centuries as “period[s] of breaks, as well as of continuities, setting in play a number of impulses whose directions do not necessarily, in the end, add up”. They do not have to add up, in the sense of doing the same work. The different constitutive forces, say anti-Jewish sentiment, Graeco-Roman supremacy and ethnic reasoning, may determine different directions. But they may complement each other when filtered through the proto-whiteness optic *Adversus Judaeos*. In which case, conjunctures are by definition “overdetermined” because they are determined by their ‘articulations’. The notion of ‘overdetermined’ is due to the conjuncture being determined, yet “determining in relation to the other moments with which they are linked” – Procter, *Stuart Hall*, 61–2.

³⁵³ Stuart Hall, ‘Assembling the 1980s’, 4.

2.2 *The Adversus Judaeos Tradition*

Rosemary Radford Ruether argues that the *Adversus Judaeos* tradition was a rhetorical, anti-Judaism polemic that gave rise to a racial antisemitic malady in Christianity. This wave of rhetoric, she insists, was embedded in the writings of the NT – the Gospels, Synoptics, Acts and Paul’s writings, to be exact³⁵⁴ – even though it was reliant on some antisemitic seeds of pagan origin.³⁵⁵ The essence of the *Adversus Judaeos* tradition, she argues, was a hermeneutical one,³⁵⁶ where NT writers, employing a midrashic method, manipulated the sacred text of the Hebrew Bible for their own Christological ends.³⁵⁷ The net effect of this christological hermeneutic had an anti-Judaism bearing for the Fathers, because the methods employed were anti-talmudic,³⁵⁸ basing its messianic midrash not on the Torah, as the Pharisees would, but on the Writings and the Prophets, i.e., the

³⁵⁴ Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1996), 64–116. Other notables taking Ruether’s lead include, Lloyd Gaston, ‘Paul and the Torah’, in *Anti-Semitism and the Foundations of Christianity*, ed. by Alan T. Davies (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 51; John T. Townsend, ‘The Gospel of John and the Jews: The Story of a Religious Divorce’, in *Anti-Semitism and the Foundations of Christianity*, ed. by Alan T. Davies (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 72–4; Samuel Sandmel, *Anti-Semitism in the New Testament?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 17, 127, 140–41; Léon Poliakov, ‘Antisemitism: The Early Christian Period’, ed. by Fred Skolnik, *Encyclopaedia Judaica: Anh-Az* (Detroit: Thompson Gale, 2007), 209–10; Norman A. Beck, *Mature Christianity in the 21st Century: The Recognition and Repudiation of the Anti-Jewish Polemic of the New Testament*, Expanded and Revised (New York: American Interfaith Institute/World Alliance, 1994), 86, 131, 217–18, 284; Jack T. Sanders, *The Jews in Luke-Acts* (London: SCM Press, 1987), xvi. Jon Weatherly closely critiques this antisemitic position by examining Sander’s work, concluding that for Luke it was actually the Jewish leadership – the Sanhedrin – that should be held culpable for the death of Jesus, not the majority of Jews. See Jon A. Weatherly, *Jewish Responsibility for the Death of Jesus in Luke-Acts*, JSNTSup, 106 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994). For a critique of Ruether’s position see, John G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (NY; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 24–34. He quotes, “These critics have focused on five issues: (A) Ruether’s monocausal view of Christian anti-Judaism as rooted exclusively in Christian messianic theology; (B) the figure of Jesus; (C) her interpretation of the canonical gospels and of (D) Paul’s views of Israel, the Torah and Judaism; (E) the influence of pre-Christian, pagan anti-Semitism in Christian circles; and (F) the treatment of Judaism in ancient and modern literature”, (p. 24).

³⁵⁵ Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 30.

³⁵⁶ Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 54.

³⁵⁷ Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 65–6.

³⁵⁸ Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 162.

Psalms and Prophets.³⁵⁹ Notwithstanding the earlier point made that any discernible anti-Judaic attitude incipient in the NT was within a ‘safe’ Jewish context given that the main authors considered themselves Jewish, Ruether’s argument does not consider the often employed rhetorical, invective tool, *psogos*, which was normative for the way Jewish authors argued. When read in this way, the authors of NT are seen to be speaking largely to an in-group, critiquing their own people, rather like the Qumran people, for example, scolding the rest of Israel as the “assembly of Belial,” for their waywardness.³⁶⁰

Ruether’s explanation, on the other hand, focuses on the Graeco-Roman rhetorics of the NT writers, who are constructing their own theology while deploying anti-imperial ideology. It is the combination of Graeco-Roman rhetorics and anti-imperialist ideology (even theology) that sharpens the invectives and complicates the reading of the NT texts. It is true that the NT writers are framing their arguments around ethnicity and thereby run the risk of re-positing imperial and *kyriarchal* structures.³⁶¹ However, to ignore the *psogos* rhetorical convention of the day is to conclude prematurely and anachronistically that the NT writers were anti-Jewish. In other words, the polemical nature of the text need not be taken as antisemitic, even though the text can serve as a resource for the production of later anti-Jewish and antisemitic materialisations.³⁶² As Luke Timothy Johnson

³⁵⁹ Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 65. Given Ruether’s argument that the midrashic basis of the Christocentric hermeneutic of the NT authors was applied to the ‘writings and the prophets’, one wonders if it were applied to the Torah, whether the messianic claims would be different and the tone of the NT authors’ argumentation milder. I think not.

³⁶⁰ The “assembly of Belial” could be rendered “congregation of Satan”, 1QH^a X, 22.

³⁶¹ Kyriarchy is a term coined by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza: “Kyriarchy is best theorized as a complex pyramidal system of intersecting multiplicative social and religious structures of superordination and subordination, of ruling and oppression. Kyriarchal relations of domination are built on elite male property rights and privileges as well as on the exploitation, dependency, inferiority, and obedience of wo/men who signify all those subordinated,” Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, ‘Changing the Paradigms: Toward a Feminist Future of the Biblical Past’, in *The Future of the Biblical Past: Envisioning Biblical Studies on a Global Key*, eds. Roland Boer and Fernando F. Segovia (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2012), 296.

³⁶² The way ethnoreligious spaces were reasoned in the NT texts has served to provide a basis for a later Christian collective identity although the texts *per se* probably had no ‘prescient’ signifying control on this

points out, it was conventional practice to hurl rhetorical slander within Jewish debates, even if adopting such practices from Hellenistic philosophical schools.³⁶³ In his words, “curses were common coinage in those fights, and there were not many Jews or Gentiles who did not have at least one curse to deal with”.³⁶⁴ However, the later patristic writers were not Jews. Yet despite their ‘personal’ polemics, Thomas Oden’s caution is *apropos*: that they did not necessarily consider the Jewish people to be “racially or genetically inferior people, as modern anti-Semites are prone to do”.³⁶⁵

The *Adversus Judaeos* trope, then, could usefully be conceptualised in terms of the usage of the growing tradition of anti-religious *psogos* (ψόγος) against Judaism among the Church Fathers in the first few centuries. *Psogos* was the uncompromising rhetorical genre that attributed blame or invective onto its opponents:

The deliberative kind is either hortatory or dissuasive; for both those who give advice in private and those who speak in the assembly invariably either exhort or dissuade. The forensic kind is either accusatory or defensive; for litigants must necessarily either accuse or defend. The epideictic kind has for its subject either praise or **blame**.³⁶⁶ (Emphasis supplied.)

Christian identity. Hence, it is fair to say that the text did play a role in constructing later conceptions of ethnicities. As Buell puts it, “Jewish texts such as Paul’s letters and the gospels become Christian ones in their reception and use” – Buell, ‘Challenges and Strategies’, 39. The language of the text can equally play a role in constructing later negative conceptions of ethnicities, such as antisemitism. A project that eminently demonstrates this is: Tod Linafelt, *A Shadow of Glory: Reading the New Testament After the Holocaust* (London; New York: Routledge, 2013).

³⁶³ Luke T. Johnson, ‘The New Testament’s Anti-Jewish Slander and the Conventions of Ancient Polemic’, *JBL* 108.3 (1989): 419–441. He concludes, “curses were common coinage in those fights, and there were not many Jews or Gentiles who did not have at least one curse to deal with”, (p. 441).

³⁶⁴ Johnson, ‘Anti-Jewish Slander’, 441.

³⁶⁵ Thomas C. Oden, ‘General Introduction’, ed. by Andrew Louth, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Genesis 1-11* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2001), xxvii–xxviii.

³⁶⁶ Ar. *Rhet.* 1358b. ψόγος is the ninth of the ancient progymnasmata and is linked with its opposite encomium, which is “an exposition of the good qualities of a person or thing”, George Alexander Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 81. Note also,

Psogos became a rhetorical tool of the *Adversus Judaeos* tradition among the early Christian writers to polemicise the Jews as anti-Christian, though couched in the form of apologetics.³⁶⁷ The term *Adversus Judaeos* was used variously by the Church Fathers but was probably first formalised in a late second century treatise of Tertullian's *Adversus Judaeos*. However, given Tertullian's attempt to persuade a Jew of the primacy (and supersessionism) of Christianity, its language is mild in comparison with others in the Church Fathers tradition. John Chrysostom (c. 349 – 407), two centuries later, is a case in point, whose polemic, which goes by the same name, *Adversus Judaeos*, was entirely vitriolic, as we shall see later.

Psogos was also deployed as a sexualised discursive tool. The tool is characterised by the logics of sexual reasoning, where in an effort to disparage 'the Other' or their point of view, sexual imagery or references are employed as a method of intensifying the criticism. This is seen in inter-Jewish polemics, such as in *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* (early second century). Here, Levi castigates his fellow Jews for their sexual sins as to why Israel will be subjected to God's judgement (*T. Levi* 14.5-8).³⁶⁸ It is not unlike the Hebrew prophets, where Jerusalem or Israel is chastised for playing "the whore" (Ezekiel 16:15. Cf. Isa. 1:21; 57:3; Jer. 2:20; 3:1-9; Hosea 4:14). We will witness this kind of utility when discussing the Church Fathers' reception of the Ethiopian eunuch below. For

that "the techniques of the *psogos* are apparent in the use of half-truths, innuendo, guilt by association, abusive and incendiary language, malicious comparisons, and in all, excess and exaggeration", Robert L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late 4th Century* (Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2004), 116.

³⁶⁷ For an overview of the Church Fathers' defence of Christianity against the Jews see, A. Lukyn Williams, *'Adversus Judaeos': A Bird's-Eye View of Christian 'Apologiae' until the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935).

³⁶⁸ "Out of covetousness you will teach the commandments of the Lord, you will pollute married women, and you will defile the virgins of Jerusalem. With harlots and adulteresses, you will be joined, and the daughters of the Gentiles, you will take as wives, purifying them with an unlawful purification, and your union shall be like that of Sodom and Gomorrah", (*T. Levi*, 14.5-8). Collins suggests that this was an invective against Jewish leaders. See, Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 154–56.

whilst *psogos* was the basis for inter-Jewish polemics, it took on another level of hate speech during the period of the Patristic writers.³⁶⁹ The deployment of the sexual invective was commonly used in the wider Graeco-Roman society. Its usage can be seen as early as the first century, where the Roman poet, Martial (Marcus Valerius Martialis, c. 38/41 – 102 /104), satirises the genitalia of Jewish circumcision as macrophallic and therefore sexually potent.³⁷⁰

Psogos was also deployed through the discursive tool of ethnic reasoning. The tool is characterised by the logics of ethnic reasoning, where, to argue a point, ethnic categories were invoked to sharpen the intensity of the argument's impact. This has already been alluded to in the Tertullian example. What is useful to bear in mind, however, is how variously ethnic reasoning is employed. Buell, in developing this discursive tool, identifies four motivations for and applications of ethnic reasoning. First, religious groups utilised their understanding of race/ethnicity to produce language of peoplehood and citizenship, whether through biblical, civic or political texts. Second, race/ethnicity were deemed to be both fluid (transformation) and fixed (essence) when mobilised in categories of *genos*, *ethnos*, *laos* and *phulon*.³⁷¹ Third, the fluidity and fixedness of the

³⁶⁹ The Jewish presence in the imagination of the early Christians and their formation often precipitated into real but violent Christian-Jewish interactions, see James Everett Seaver, *Persecution of the Jews in the Roman Empire, 300-438*, Humanistic Studies, 30 (Kansas: University of Kansas Publications), 66–8. For skirmishes between Palestinian groups between 66 BCE – 135 CE, see Adrian Goldsworthy, “Men Casually Armed against Fully Equipped Regulars”: The Roman Military Response to Jewish Insurgency 63 BCE – 135 CE, in *Jews and Christians in the First and Second Centuries: How to Write Their History*, ed. by Peter J. Tomson and Joshua J. Schwartz (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2014), 207–37.

³⁷⁰ Peter Schäfer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World*, Reprint ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 100–2. For a wider discussion on the use of sexual invectives in the Church Fathers, see Susanna Drake, *Slandering the Jew: Sexuality and Difference in Early Christian Texts* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Jennifer Wright Knust, *Abandoned to Lust: Sexual Slander and Ancient Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013). Drake argues that the portrayal of Jews as hypersexually carnal within the Patristic corpus was a discourse adopted in order to distinguish the Jew from the Christians and thereby justify antisemitic violence. Knust examines how “sexual slander as a discursive practice” by the early Christians – first to third centuries – amounted to a struggle for power and prestige, within the context of ancient Graeco-Roman polemics (p. 13).

³⁷¹ *Genos*, *ethnos*, *laos* and *phulon* are respectively the transliterated forms of γένος (race/descendant), ἔθνος (nation/people), λαός (people), φῦλον (tribe).

race/ethnicity lent themselves to articulating belonging in terms of universalism, where Christianity, for example, is idealised as the ultimately inclusive religion. Fourth, in its early formation Christianity was comprised of competing traditions, which meant that polemics were often engaged in terms of *genos*, *ethnos*, *laos* and *phulon* to forge a triumphalist position to the detriment of the other(s).³⁷²

The point here is that given the normative nature of the *psogos* discourse in debates as well as polemics, the modern reader should filter their conclusions with this context in mind. An enlightened, scientific reader who clinically isolates the rhetoric might be susceptible to exaggerating the already inflammatory language. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of these ideas should speak for itself.³⁷³

Although not naming it as such, Ruether's description of (Platonic) dualistic reasoning amounts to a constituent 'episteme' of the *Adversus Judaeos* trope. This is demonstrated as manifest in the NT explanations of messianism and eschatology, where the dialectic signifiers becomes dualistic in Christian usage, giving rise to supersessionism.³⁷⁴ Coupled with the primacy of a Graeco-Roman worldview, this dualism performs similarly to the compulsion of the Cartesian episteme of whiteness to exact, single out, separate, label and stereotype. And this is all the more pronounced when the performativity is motivated by a racialised optic.

³⁷² Buell, *Why This New Race*, 2–3.

³⁷³ It should also be borne in mind that it was the Church Fathers, not the laity, who were largely driven to oppose Jewish influences, as their writings are sprinkled with efforts to discourage their fellow Christians from: engaging in Jewish practices – *The Didascalia Apostolorum in English*, trans. by Margaret Dunlop Smith Gibson (London: C.J. Clay, 1903), 26; attending synagogues, adopting Jewish practices (e.g., Didascalia 26), frequenting synagogues (e.g., Origen, *Hom. Lev.* 5.8; Chrysostom, *Adv. Jud.*), and calling themselves "Jews" (e.g., Augustine, *Ep.* 196; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat.* 10.16).

³⁷⁴ Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 95–8, 239.

In sum, the *Adversus Judaeos* tradition was characterised by the rhetorical invective, *psogos*, itself deployed by means of the discursive tools, ethnic and sexual reasoning. These tools are also later deployed with the later Cartesian optic of whiteness. When reading the reception of the Ethiopian eunuch story by the Church Fathers the *Adversus Judaeos* metanarrative must be borne in mind. Indeed, it serves as the haunting backdrop for the Church Fathers' interpretation of the Ethiopian eunuch. But its beginnings were not seamless and even. The Jews' relationship with Hellenism in the Second Temple period tended to be fraught and antagonistic, though often relatively short-lived.³⁷⁵ Likewise, the Church Fathers, in addition to being conflicted in their relation to Judaism, were sometimes antagonistic towards Hellenism, especially when it conflicted with Christianity as they saw it. Among the most influential of the Ante-Nicene Church Fathers were Justin Martyr and Tertullian, who, as is briefly demonstrated, in many ways set the tone for the onslaught of the patristic rhetorics of the conjunctural *Adversus Judaeos* phenomenon.

2.2.1.1 Justin Martyr

Justin Martyr (c. 100 – 165) of Flavia Neapolis, Samaria, is probably the distinguished Church Father who first articulated the supplanting of Judaism with Christianity as a strategy for the primacy of Christianity.³⁷⁶ This

³⁷⁵ Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*, trans. by J. Bowden, vol. 1 (London: SCM-Canterbury Press, 1974); John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora*, The Biblical Resource Series, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000). The ease with which the Ptolemies traded with the Hasmoneans, for example, is widely recorded in the *Zeno* papyri and Josephus's *Antiquities*. For the accounts recorded in the *Zeno* papyri see *CPJ* 1.115–146. For an example of an account of trading in Josephus's *Antiquities* see the tales of the Tobiads in *Ant.* 12.4.1–11.

³⁷⁶ Justin argues for Christian supersessionism, though not in those words, in his *Dialogue* (with a Hellenistic Jew, Trypho). For an excellent analysis of Justin's *Dialogue*, see S. Krauss, 'The Jews in the Works of the Church Fathers: Justin Martyr', ed. by Israel Abrahams, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 1888–1891, 5 (1892):122–34). The dating for *Dialogue* is generally considered to be circa 155–160. Cf. Susan J. Wendel, *Scriptural Interpretation and Community Self-Definition in Luke-Acts and the Writings of Justin Martyr* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011), 11. Though, there is an argument for 147–154. Cf. Denis Minns and Paul Parvis, *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 44. For an exploration into the concrete and imaginary Jewish-Christian interactions as a basis for shaping Christian

supersessionism would go unheeded if it were not for Justin predicating the ancestry of Christianity not on Judaism but on the platform of Graeco-Roman philosophy. Justin, a Gentile of pagan birth and converted to Christianity,³⁷⁷ adopted Philo's theory of the *Logos* as 'rational power' (δύναμις λόγικη, *Dial.* 61.1), itself a Platonic idea. W. H. D. Frend goes as far as to suggest that Justin applied the notions of Platonic and Stoic rationality to Jesus arbitrarily without due diligence of understanding the nature of deity in the Hebrew bible.³⁷⁸ This ontological rift between Hebrew and Graeco-Roman conceptions of deity played into Justin's notion of the pre-existent *Logos* (Christ) who mediated God in the Hebrew bible (*1 Apol.* 5.3–4; 46.2–5; *2 Apol.* 8.1–3; 9.2; 10.4–8; 13.1–6.) – e.g., the *Logos*, not God but God's legitimate mode of expression, the pre-existent Christ, appeared to Moses at the burning bush (*Dial.* 127.1–5).³⁷⁹ In this light, Justin insists that the Jews did not sufficiently understand their own scriptures (*1 Apol.* 63.11). His appropriation of the Hebrew scripture as the Christians' sacred text was in keeping with the wider cultural practice, where other groups also appropriated ancient, authoritative texts that would credit their self-interest and recognition.³⁸⁰ In fact, he compounds the Christians' putative ignorance by

supremacy, see Leonard Victor Rutgers, *Making Myths: Jews in Early Christian Identity Formation* (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2009).

³⁷⁷ Justin's self-identity as a Gentile is found in *1 Apol.* 53; *Dial.* 41.3, and it should not be lost on his privileging of Hellenistic Christianity. He was educated in Greek philosophy (*Dial.* 2) and his pagan origins are ascertained from *Dial.* 1–9.

³⁷⁸ W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1984), 237. In this vein, Charles Hodge, in the nineteenth century made a similar, perspicacious point: "the philosophy, from which this theory of the Logos was borrowed, was utterly opposed to the Christian system. The Logos of Plato and Philo was only a collective term for the ideal world, the ἰδέα τῶν ἰδεῶν; and therefore, the real distinction between God and the Logos, was that between God as hidden and God as revealed. God in himself was ὁ θεός; God in nature was the Logos. This is, after all, the old heathen, pantheistic doctrine, which makes the universe the manifestation, or existence form of God," Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols (New York: Scribner, Armstrong and Co., 1873), 1:442.

³⁷⁹ For Christ's appearance and participation in creation, see *1 Apol.* 64.5; *2 Apol.* 6.1–3; *Dial.* 61–2.

³⁸⁰ For examples of appropriation of authoritative texts, see Tim Whitmarsh, *Ancient Greek Literature, Cultural History of Literature* (Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2004), 20, 21; David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 17, 23–72; and Peter T. Struck, *Birth of the Symbol: Ancient Readers at the Limits of Their Texts*

suggesting that Greek philosophers, such as Socrates and Plato, were enlightened by the *Logos* and thereby understood better the prophecies as propounded by the prophets. In this way, there was commensurability for Justin between Hellenistic and Hebrew thought.³⁸¹

The *Logos*, for Justin, was λόγος σπερματικός (seminal word/reason, or generative principle of the universe), in that every human soul has a seed of the divine *Logos* implanted within it (2 *Apol.* 8.1), though Jesus embodied the full *Logos*. Its presence rendered every human potentially a Christian. Justin was invoking Stoic philosophy, which purported that the λόγος σπερματικός was sown in every human being by the divine *Logos*.³⁸² It is possible, as some have shown, that the Stoic concept was fused with Platonic thought to construe the essence of λόγος σπερματικός as the divine, rational essence inhabiting the human being.³⁸³

This concept of λόγος σπερματικός grew within Christian scholarship. For example, after Justin, Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215), purported in his *Protreptikos* that the original human was a Christian because of the *Logos* within him:

Yet none of these [peoples] at least existed before the world (κόσμος). But before the foundation of the world were we, who, because destined to be in Him, pre-existed in the eye of God before

(Princeton, N.J.; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 1–20.

³⁸¹ Richard M Price, 'Are There "holy Pagans" in Justin Martyr', *Studia Patristica* 31 (1997): 168–70.

³⁸² P. A. Meijer, *Stoic Theology: Proofs for the Existence of the Cosmic God and of the Traditional Gods, Including a Commentary on Cleanthes' Hymn on Zeus* (Delft: Eburon Uitgeverij B.V., 2007), 3–30. For Justin's possible dependence on Philo, the Fourth Gospel, the concept of Wisdom in the LXX, or all three, see Ragjtak Holte, 'Logos Spermatikos, Christianity and Ancient Philosophy according to St. Justin's Apologies', *Studia Theologica – Nordic Journal of Theology* 12.1 (1958): 109–168; and R. M. Price, "'Hellenization" and Logos Doctrine in Justin Martyr', *VC* 42.1 (1988): 18–23; and, Demetrius Christ Trakatellis, *The Pre-Existence of Christ in the Writings of Justin Martyr* (Missoula, MO: Scholars Press, 1976).

³⁸³ Erwin R. Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr* (BiblioBazaar, 2009), 1–32. See also Emily J. Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century: The Case of Tatian*, Routledge Early Church Monographs (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 74–94.

—we the rational creatures of the Word (λόγικα) of God, on whose account we date from the beginning; for “in the beginning was the Word.” Well, inasmuch as the Word was from the first, He was and is the divine source of all things; but inasmuch as He has now assumed the name Christ, consecrated of old, and worthy of power, he has been called by me the New Song.³⁸⁴

The peoples to whom Clement was referring were traditionally viewed as the most ancient of the human race, i.e., the Egyptians, Arcadians, and Phrygians. Yet the Christian preceded them because they had the *Logos*. The fullness of the *Logos* was not realised until Christ historically appeared. Only then were all humans, past and present, restored and in a position to find reunion (cf. *Prot.* 1.6.4–5; 9.88.2–3).

For Justin, even the Greek philosophers such as Socrates and Heraclitus were Christians because they lived according to the *Logos* in them. As such, they could stand beside (Jewish) barbarians such as Abraham and Elijah.³⁸⁵ Thus, Christians were held not only to be the oldest, but the only authentic human race.³⁸⁶

Drawing on this Stoic concept of λόγος σπερματικός, suggesting that there is a bit of God in all human beings, Justin, however, not only universalises the Christian as the ultimate human, but racialises the Christian with a Hellenistic gaze – his use of ‘Christian’ is consistently interchangeable with ‘Gentile’ in his texts.³⁸⁷ The Hellenistic gaze is a Graeco-Roman Gentile Christian gaze, which reconstructs the human being into a *Logos* inspired, rationally thinking Christian, whose Christocentric reading of the Jewish scriptures supplants the outmoded Jewish

³⁸⁴ *Prot.* 1.6.4–5.

³⁸⁵ 1 *Apol.* 46.2.

³⁸⁶ Perhaps the most systematic of all the Church Fathers in his construction of λόγος σπερματικός and its novel originality to Christianity is Clement’s younger contemporary, Origen, in his *De Principiis*.

³⁸⁷ Jeffrey S. Siker, *Disinheriting the Jews: Abraham in Early Christian Controversy* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 189–92.

interpretations. This type of ethnoreligious reconstruction around a collective identity was not unusual. Buell highlights that “claims of historical ties between peoples, especially when these peoples are perceived to be different in the present, were used in a range of contexts”.³⁸⁸ Only for Justin, the new identity is the new Israel (*Dial.* 11.5), a new “race” (116.3; 119.3; 138.2).³⁸⁹

However, as Frances Young notes, there was some tension with the Graeco-Roman identity, in that Justin did argue that the Jewish scriptures were superior to the Greek notion of *paideia*.³⁹⁰ Whereas Graeco-Roman *paideia* appealed to Homer, for example, Justin was keen to demonstrate that the Christians appealed to the Jewish scriptures as an ancient source for its shaping and identity. Nevertheless, by arguing for the antecendence of Jewish scriptures to Graeco-Roman philosophy Justin was essentially wedded to a Graeco-Roman metaphysics as the basis for (Christianised) scriptural epistemology:

For Moses is more ancient than all the Greek writers. And whatever both philosophers and poets have said concerning the immortality of the soul, or punishments after death, or contemplation of things heavenly, or doctrines of the like kind,

³⁸⁸ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 89. Buell further argues that “many non-Greeks also accepted Greek interpretations of their national origins or some of the basic premises of Greek historiography and adapted them to produce their own origin stories (as is the case of linking Romans with Greek history via Aeneas and the Trojans)”, p.90. Cf. Elias J. Bickerman, ‘Origines Gentium’, *Classical Philology*, 47.2 (1952): 73–4, where he cites that the process of hellenisation educated barbarians to adopt, in time, the kinship of the dominant race. For a case study, see Antony Spawforth, ‘Shade of Greekness: A Lydian Case Study’, in *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*, ed. by Irad Malkin, Center for Hellenic Studies Colloquia (Washington, DC; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 374–400. Even Jewish writers sought to reconstruct Hellenistic cultural history to privilege Judaism as the progenitor of the ‘best’ of Greek culture: Erich S. Gruen, ‘Jewish Perspectives on Greek Culture and Ethnicity’, in *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*, ed. by Irad Malkin, Center for Hellenic Studies Colloquia (Washington, DC; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 347–73.

³⁸⁹ Peter Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church*, SNTSMS 10 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 11; Jeffrey S. Siker, *Disinheriting the Jews*, 174–75; Judith Lieu, *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 136. However, ‘race’ is not to be construed in the modern sense of the word, but one that nevertheless conceptualises ethnicity.

³⁹⁰ Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 49–75.

they have received such suggestions from the prophets as have enabled them to understand and interpret these things.³⁹¹

Justin's idea of truth, though putatively channelled through the Jewish prophets, claimed ontological equivalence with a Graeco-Roman paradigm of truth. Although Justin sought to privilege Jewish epistemology over that of Graeco-Roman, his Christianising of Jewish scriptures essentially divested it of actual Hebrew ontology, leaving a Graeco-Roman world-view as the basis for framing any understanding of God.³⁹² Such reasoning signalled the conjunctural onset of the *Adversus Iudaeos* tradition.³⁹³ What is significant, though, is how the primacy of Graeco-Roman civilisation, whether through Jewish religious rhetoric or not, was presumed as the predecessor of the Graeco-Gentile Christian ideal type.

2.2.1.2 Tertullian

Tertullian (c. 155-240), the first of the Latin Fathers from Carthage, a Roman province in North Africa, and a premier, prolific theologian among the Church Fathers, did not draw on Graeco-Roman philosophy, unlike Justin, to privilege Christianity. His famous words are *apropos*:

What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? What between heretics and Christians? Our instruction comes from "the porch of

³⁹¹ 1 *Apol.* 44.15-18.

³⁹² For the ontological and epistemological differences between Hebrew and Greek thought, see the classic Thorleif Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*, trans. by Jules L. Moreau (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1970).

³⁹³ For Paula Fredriksen, Justin employed a "full arsenal of arguments" "to provide flexible, powerful, and extremely long-lived rhetorical traditions of Christian anti-Judaism". See, Paula Fredriksen, 'Roman Christianity and the Post-Roman West: The Social Correlates of the Contra Iudaeos Tradition', in *Jews, Christians, and the Roman Empire: The Poetics of Power in Late Antiquity*, ed. by Natalie B. Dohrmann and Annette Yoshiko Reed (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 251. For Fredriksen, the sources of Justin's 'anti-Judaism' span "the criticisms of Jews and of Judaism available in Jewish texts; the hostile caricatures of Jews available in learned Graeco-Roman ethnographies; the polarizing and polemical nature of rhetorical culture; and the metaphysics implicit in antiquity's philosophical koine", (p. 251).

Solomon,” who had himself taught that “the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart.” Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition! We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus, no inquisition after enjoying the gospel! With our faith, we desire no further belief. For this is our palmary faith, that there is nothing which we ought to believe besides.³⁹⁴

Yet his supersessionism was no less frank, as he was as convicted that Christianity was the new Judaism. Given his distancing from Graeco-Roman philosophy, it has been demonstrated that his rhetorical arguments were however influenced by Graeco-Roman epistemology. The Stoics, for one, have been shown to influence his rhetoric.³⁹⁵ In fact, Tertullian saw Hellenistic philosophy as a corrupting force. Nevertheless, his approach was contrariwise framed by a Hellenistic epistemology when discussing Christian theology. That said, he was relentlessly scathing of the Alexandrian Jews due, in no small part, to their perceived and unwanted influence over Christians.³⁹⁶

Tertullian held that the repository for interpreting scriptures was not the individual, but the church. This way he was able to counter heretics by saying

³⁹⁴ Tertullian, ‘The Prescription Against Heretics’, (*ANF* 3:246).

³⁹⁵ Eric Osborn, ‘The Conflict of Opposition in the Theology of Tertullian’, *Augustinianum* 35 (1995): 623–39. For an assessment of how stoic metaphysics influences Tertullian’s worldview, see further Eric Osborn, *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 35–6, 126, 173–75. For a wider discussion on how Graeco-Roman (Athenian) metaphysics served as a backdrop for Tertullian’s explanation of the Trinity, see J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th ed. (London; New York: Continuum International Publishing Group – Mowbray, 2006), 114–15; Johannes Quasten S.T.D., *Patrology*, 7th Paperback Printing, 4 vols (Allen, TX: Christian Classics, 1993), 2:320–1. For the Hellenistic influence on Tertullian’s theology of the millennium through the methodology of allegorisation, see John Arnott MacCulloch, ‘Eschatology’, in *The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark., 1912), 5:388. For a wider detailed study of the influence of Platonic ideas on Hellenistic Christian thought, see John M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. To A.D. 220* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996). For a good example of the change Hebrew thought experienced in its transition to Hellenistic thought, particularly through the Greek language, see Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 6th rev. ed. (Edinburgh; Carlisle, Pa.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1971), 192–3; and John A. T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology*, SBT 5 (London: SCM Press, 2012), 11–33.

³⁹⁶ Tertullian claimed, for example, that Jews needed to bathe daily because of their impure nature: *De bapt.* 15; *De orat.* 14; that synagogues were scorned by Jeremiah (2:13), “broken cisterns which cannot even hold water”, because they do not contain the Holy Spirit; see *Adv. Jud.* 13:14–15.

that what they reasoned, even at the most promising of times, was inadmissible since it was not produced by the church.³⁹⁷ Indeed, “it is only the apostolic faith, which is manifested in the rule of faith, where proper interpretation of scripture is manifested”.³⁹⁸

Notice, however, how Tertullian nuances his apologetics through the use of ethnic reasoning. Like Justin, his ideal type is universalised as a new race within a binary taxonomy of races. He strenuously argued against the notion of a third race (*tertium genus*) or nation (*natio*) cited by the likes of the anonymous author of the Epistle to Diognetus,³⁹⁹ Clement,⁴⁰⁰ and Aristides.⁴⁰¹ This is, although it is

³⁹⁷ Tertullian, ‘Prescription’, 254–5.

³⁹⁸ Craig D. Allert, *Revelation, Truth, Canon and Interpretation: Studies in Justin Martyr’s ‘Dialogue with Trypho’*, VC Supplements (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2002), 210.

³⁹⁹ The author of the Epistle to Diognetus (c.130-late second century) does not actually mention the term ‘third race’ nor *ἔθνος* but does make a distinction between Christians and both Jews and Greeks on religious grounds and even then, the distinction is not very clear. See, Erich S. Gruen, ‘Christians as a “Third Race”: Is Ethnicity at Issue?’, in *Christianity in the Second Century: Themes and Developments*, ed. by James Carleton Paget and Judith Lieu (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 240. Gruen along with Oskar Skarsaune goes on to argue that the actual term ‘third race’ is not an ethnic marker of Christian identity in the second century. They suggest that the term is a religious designation to distinguish Christianity from its Jewish forbears. In fact, Epistle to Diognetus 5:1-11 remarks that Christians are not to be distinguished from others by language, (civic) customs and dwellings, for they freely share the same culture of the places in which they live as fellow citizens (*πολίται*, v.5). See also, Oskar Skarsaune, ‘Ethnic Discourse in Early Christianity’, in *Christianity in the Second Century: Themes and Developments*, ed. by James Carleton Paget and Judith Lieu (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 250–64.

⁴⁰⁰ Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215) appears to be the first to invoke the phrase, ‘third race’, *τρίτος γένος* (Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 6.5.41.6) in a quote from a lost document, *The Preaching of Peter*, *Πετρῶν Κερυγμα*. Again, the phrase seems to be a reference to the kind of worship and religious practice that is distinctive from that of Jews and Greek (Gentiles): “But we, who worship Him in a new way, in the third form (*τρίτῳ γένει*), are Christians” (6.5.41.6). Note that the translator translates *γένει* as ‘form’ as opposed to ‘race’, thereby erasing the ethnic conceptualisation of the term. This correct interpretation is underscored in the verse that follows: “For clearly, as I think, he showed that the one and only God was known by the Greeks in a Gentile way, by the Jews Judaically, and in a new and spiritual way by us” (6.5.41.7 – 6.5.42.1). Clement conceives of the three major peoples – the Greeks (Gentiles), the Jews and the Christians – as being gathered together “into one kind/way...by the different covenants of the one Lord” *εἰς τὸ ἓν γένος [...] διαφόροις διαθήκαις τοῦ ἐνὸς κυρίου* (6.5.42.2-3). The different covenants appear to be the different religious traditions that are being subsumed under the “one word of the Lord” – *ἐνὸς κυρίου ῥήματι* (6.5.42.3). Cf. Denise Kimber Buell, ‘Rethinking the Relevance of Race for Early Christian Self-Definition’, *HTR* 94.4 (2001): 460–61.

⁴⁰¹ *Apol. Arist.* 2. The conceptualisation of *τρίτος γένος* by the Apology of Aristides (c.130) is not straight forward as there are extant three versions in Greek, Syriac and Armenian, which do not always correspond. For an analysis of how these might contribute to Aristides’s understanding of “third race/way/form”, see Gruen, ‘Christians as a “Third Race”’, 242–45.

likely that they did not construe γένος – they wrote in Greek – biologically as an ethnoracial idea.⁴⁰² In his time and town, Carthage, he actually identified the term as derisory levelled by the Romans, implying that Christianity was inferior to other religions (*Ad Nationes* 1.8.1, 20; *De Scorpiace* 10.10).⁴⁰³ This might have had something to do with the religio-political landscape of Carthage as a Roman colony, which would have had a few Roman and non-Roman elites. In such places, the Romans would have encouraged the practice of their religious cults to affirm their citizenship in contrast to the status of non-citizens.⁴⁰⁴ For Tertullian the label of third race might then have been too close to the notion of nation in competition with Rome, and, thus, render the Christians more vulnerable to persecution. Christians were dispersed across different nations, just like the Roman religions. Yet the Roman religions were not singled out as a different race, and rightly so. In fact, for Tertullian “there is no nation indeed which is not Christian” (*Ad Nationes* 1.8). On this basis, he appealed for recognition along religious lines, like other religions. However, he maintained that the Christian religion excelled in rendering their adherents as the best Romans.

What we glean from Justin and Tertullian is that their supersessionism and tone of religious supremacy set the tone for a later intensification of anti-Judaism, whether culturally, religiously or racially. The escalation of their argumentation for the legitimacy and plausibility of Christianity based on Hellenistic metaphysics anticipated a later season of discontent, the *Adversus Iudaeos* tradition. Articulating the Gentile Christian along an ethnoreligious trajectory,

⁴⁰² Gruen, ‘Christians as a “Third Race”’. Strikingly, there are no non-Christian writers known for invoking the notion of the ‘third race’, where Christians comprised a third category in the second-third century. In fact, Gruen insists that “there is no other testimony anywhere to suggest that any pagan writer, whether hostile, friendly, or neutral, ever employed the concept of a ‘third race’” (p. 248).

⁴⁰³ Both *Ad Nationes* 1.8.1, 20 and *De Scorpiace* 10.10 reflects scornful sarcasm, although the latter a little less so.

⁴⁰⁴ Mary Beard, John A. North and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome: A History*, 2 vols. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1:336–7.

where the λόγος σπερματικός becomes identifiable with the meaning and destiny of the Graeco-Roman Gentile Christian, anticipates an imagined archetypal human being (ideal type) that is embodied.

2.3 The Ethiopian Eunuch and the Church Fathers

Given that within Christendom the politico-socio-religious (conjunctural) shift to a Graeco-Christian ideal type was occasioned largely by the *Adversus Judaeos* tradition, it might prove instructive to examine the Church Fathers against this trajectory to see if there is any shift especially with respect to the ethnoreligious identity of the Ethiopian eunuch. The Church Fathers is the corpus of writings emergent from the first six centuries that is attributable to the first Christian theologians, though the earliest of them are the Apostolic Fathers (such as Clement of Rome and Ignatius of Antioch), who incidentally make no reference to the Ethiopian eunuch. The literature spawned by this period has offered successive generations of scholars invaluable insight into how the early Christians interpreted and applied the Biblical text and have proven to be formative in the writing of even modern theologians. Our pericope, Acts 8:26-40, is a case in point.

In his PhD dissertation on the Ethiopian eunuch, Cottrell R. Carson established a formative link between the writings of the Church Fathers and modern exegetes such as Westcott and Hort (1881), Conzelmann (1963) and Haenchen (1967).⁴⁰⁵ Carson creatively argued through the interpretative lens of ‘cultural marronage’ that the early Christians “were a community in marronage and the Ethiopian eunuch story would have embodied important aspects of their self-

⁴⁰⁵ Carson, ‘Do You Understand what You Are Reading?’ xiv, 188.

understanding”.⁴⁰⁶ He helped to demonstrate that a critical analysis of what the Church Fathers wrote not only unveiled their ideological reading of the text but also highlighted the continuity and discontinuity they had upon later readings of the text. He further made the astute point that the Church Fathers ought to be interpreted within their socio-political understanding of Ethiopians and eunuchs and not be given the *carte blanche* influence that they have wielded upon subsequent readings of the story.⁴⁰⁷ This is largely because while the otherness of the Ethiopian eunuch is acknowledged, his marginalisation is mirrored both in their marginalisation of him and understanding of the book of Acts. This is especially brought into sharp relief when it comes to bear upon the question that drives this dissertation, indeed this chapter: why cannot the Ethiopian eunuch conceivably be a Jew?

Since neither Carson nor for that matter Lawrence, Byron and Mary Ann Stachow⁴⁰⁸ consider the *Adversus Judaeos* phenomenon as the backdrop for the literary development of early Christian identity, the Church Fathers need to be re-examined within their ideological context with this in mind. While it might not have been their primary intention to present the ethnoreligious identity of the Ethiopian eunuch, one can glean from the way they cite the Ethiopian eunuch motivations for concluding a particular subjectivity of him. Furthermore, while their ethnoreligious predisposition of him might not be historically conclusive in and of itself, when held together, the cumulative weight of their assertions may indeed attest to be ideologically discernible. As mentioned before, I am not concerned about deducing the Ethiopian eunuch’s particular ethnoreligious

⁴⁰⁶ Carson, ‘Do You Understand what You Are Reading?’ 10.

⁴⁰⁷ Carson, ‘Do You Understand what You Are Reading?’ 30.

⁴⁰⁸ Mary Ann Stachow, “‘Do You Understand What You Are reading?’ (Acts 8:30): A Historical-Critical Reexamination of the Pericope of Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-40)’ (PhD diss., The Catholic University of America, 1998).

identity. I am particularly concerned with motivations as to why for some readerships it is inconceivable for him to be a fully-fledged Jew. This is where the analytical tool of whiteness as an anticipative, signifying tool – bearing in mind its alignment with the Cartesian gaze of a Graeco-Roman Gentile ideal type – will be helpful. It is in this light that the Church Fathers' reading of him will be examined.

Views about the Ethiopian's ethnoreligious identity will be canvassed from the Church Fathers corpus chronologically as and when they make a connection with him whether implicitly or explicitly. However, views towards Ethiopians in general, elites, eunuchs and Jewish others will be canvassed in Part 2 of the dissertation, where the social and cultural texture of the story will be explored.

2.3.1 The Jewish Identity of the Ethiopian Eunuch

An investigation into the Patristic writers has yielded seven Church Fathers who alluded to the ethnoreligious identity of the Ethiopian eunuch. First, we will look at Irenaeus and Cyprian (by Pontius), who spoke in favour of a Jewish ethnoreligious identity, then Eusebius, Ephraim Syrus and John Chrysostom who spoke in favour of a Graeco-Gentile ethnoreligious identity, and Jerome, whose account seems ambivalent, then Augustine, whose account is even more ambivalent.⁴⁰⁹ A look at them in turn will prove instructive.

2.3.1.1 Irenaeus

Irenaeus (early second century⁴¹⁰ – c. 202), Bishop of Lugdunum in Gaul (179-202), is among the earliest of the Church Fathers, a body of writings that

⁴⁰⁹ There are others who instantiate the Ethiopian eunuch for his valiance. See Peter Chrysologus (380-450). See *Sermons* 56.2, 60.1, 61.1. Gregory Nazianzen (330-389) uses race thinking when alluding to his spiritual transformation, but does not comment on his ethnoreligious status (*On Holy Baptism*, PG 36:395-396). Others, like Augustine, essentialise him as a function of the doctrine of baptism (*On Christian Instruction* Prologue 7 in FC 2, p.23).

⁴¹⁰ The exact date of his birth is disputed.

followed the Apostolic Fathers,⁴¹¹ although he is misleadingly placed in the first volume of the *ANF* series. He claimed that he was the student of Polycarp (c. 69 – 155) who knew the Apostle John.⁴¹² One of the earliest prolific theologians, Irenaeus is perhaps best known for his five-volume *Adversus Haereses* (AH), Latin for “Against Heresies”, and shortened for, *On the Detection and Overthrow of the So-Called Gnosis*. This Greek body of work, now only fully preserved in Latin, is polemic in nature against the various Gnostic sects, who held that it was imperative to procure “gnosis” in order to escape from one’s bodily existence. Irenaeus essentially counter argued that the only true ‘gnosis’ (authentic knowledge) is that of Jesus Christ who came in the flesh – not in the ‘psyche’ (AH 1.9.3) – which is redemptive rather than escapist in nature.⁴¹³

Irenaeus summarises the theology of the Gnostics in AH 1.1-7, which amounts to an anthropology (and cosmology) that first disembodies Christ and second disconnects the NT from the OT (through exegesis), rendering the OT (the Jewish bible) redundant. The anthropology posits that there are three types of humans: spiritual, psychic and the material (AH 1.7.5)⁴¹⁴ – the first two of which produces the gnosis; the third of which must be disavowed. The disembodied Christ is released from the flesh into the psychic (immaterial) body and the dissolution of the OT renders its people, the Jews, obsolete as God’s elect, and

⁴¹¹ The Apostolic Fathers (late first – early second centuries) are so called because they are deemed to have had direct contact with the apostles of the NT.

⁴¹² AH 3.3.4. Cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.20.6, where Irenaeus is addressing Florinus; and Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.24.16, where he is addressing Victor. For a discussion on the plausibility of Irenaeus’s claim, see Charles Evan Hill, *From the Lost Teaching of Polycarp: Identifying Irenaeus’ Apostolic Presbyter and the Author of Ad Diognetum*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament, 186 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 80–2.

⁴¹³ Eric Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 228.

⁴¹⁴ Elaine Pagels observes that although Irenaeus stresses that the Valentinians divide humans into three kinds, he is probably mistaken in confusing the fluidity between the Valentinian “psychic” and “pneumatic”. See Elaine H. Pagels, ‘Conflicting Versions of Valentinian Eschatology: Irenaeus’ Treatise vs. the Excerpts from Theodotus’, *HTR* 67.1 (1974): 61.

replaced. This, in essence, is their basis for supersessionism. An ‘old’ is supplanted by a ‘new’. J. Kameron Carter, in his masterful analysis of Irenaeus, demonstrates that Irenaeus is resolved to discrediting the supersessionism of Gnosticism. Irenaeus is not a supercessionist. He does not theologise about replacing the Jewish with Christians or Judaism with Christianity. Instead, he seeks to show the continuity between Judaism (as represented by OT) and Christianity (as represented by NT). Carter states, “the lifeblood of ancient Gnosis, insofar as it was a movement within Christianity, was its supersessionism”.⁴¹⁵ To assert the Jewish roots of Christianity and thereby the continuity between the OT and NT – between the God of the OT and the God of the NT – is to debunk supersessionism. Irenaeus is intent on doing this by demonstrating the veracity of the theology of the incarnation – that Jesus has come in Jewish flesh. It is the incarnated Christ that allows for what Irenaeus calls, recapitulation. Recapitulation, a Pauline notion (e.g., Rom. 5:15-21; 13:9; Eph. 1:10 – ἀνακεφαλαιῶσις), is adopted to explain how God brings back (sums up) into wholeness all humans through Christ’s body (AH 3.22.2; 3.22.4).

Carter goes on to make links between the Gnostic’s operation of supersessionism and Euromodernity’s whiteness. He opines,

His [Irenaeus’s] struggle against ancient Gnosticism, I argue, is analogous to the antebellum Afro-Christian effort, as I isolate it in the aforementioned texts [Britton Hammon, Frederick Douglass and Jarena Lee], to reckon with race generally and with whiteness particularly as theological problems.⁴¹⁶

In other words, supersessionism through race thinking has teleological links with whiteness. Its process of usurpation is akin to modern whiteness’s claim to

⁴¹⁵ Carter, *Race*, 13.

⁴¹⁶ Carter, *Race*, 7.

universality. Though Carter appears to speak of whiteness in essentialist identity terms, the same could be said if it were thought of in terms of an episteme. In which case, I may go further in suggesting that the genome of supersessionism – the way it is argued and structured – can be identified with the genome of whiteness. In this way, supersessionism as a system of ethnic reasoning and racial thinking, in that the body politic of Israel is eschewed along with the body (politic) of Christ, is anticipative of fuller meanings of whiteness when performed by later modern readerships in their material, discursive, institutional, and relational guise. It is in this wider epistemological context that we find our first reference to the Ethiopian eunuch.

2.3.1.1.1 *Adversus Haereses* 3.12.8

The first reference is *AH* 3.12.8 (*ANF* 1:433). This citation falls within Irenaeus' attempt to demonstrate that Valentinus' Gnosticism, which Irenaeus himself presented as a convoluted form of Gnosticism,⁴¹⁷ was biblically unfounded. The chapter is headed, *Doctrine of the Rest of the Apostles*, where the focus is on the teachings of the twelve apostles. Irenaeus begins with Peter (*AH* 3.12.1-7, and John, in one instance), then Philip (*AH* 3.12.8) and Stephen *AH* 3.12.10-11).

In chapter 12, Irenaeus demonstrates by going through the biblical text of the *Acts of the Apostles* that: the 12 apostles were restored in number according to scripture (citing Acts 1:16); that the apostles did not preach more than one God or about some kind of "pleroma" (citing Acts 2:22-38); that, moreover, Peter and

⁴¹⁷ This description of Valentinianism, where the 'gnosis' as a mystical source provided the key to salvation and restored one to the 'pleroma', the universal order of things, has already taken up Irenaeus's first volume (*AH* 1). Here he painstakingly demonstrates that the heresies are derived from Simon Magus of Acts 8. Whereas *AH* 2 seeks to demonstrate its fallacy, *AH* 3 shows its baselessness vis-à-vis the Bible, especially the Gospels. For further discussion of the implications and problems of classifying Valentinus and Valentinians, see Karen L. King, *What Is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 154–56, 162–64. For a discussion of Valentinian polemic against non-Valentinians, see Elaine H. Pagels, 'A Valentinian Interpretation of Baptism and Eucharist — and Its Critique of "Orthodox" Sacramental Theology and Practice', *HTR* 65.2 (1972): 153–169.

John preached that the life, passion, and death of Jesus Christ was a direct fulfilment of prophecy, not about some other god, and made sense in the preaching of the resurrection of Jesus (citing Acts 3:3-12; 4:2); that the “same God that had sent the prophets, being God Himself, raised up, and gave”⁴¹⁸ in Jesus salvation to all (citing Acts 4:8-12); that the ‘gnosis’ of scripture being attested in Jesus Christ was acknowledged by all of the first witnesses and, by extension of the Holy Spirit, all believers, and thereby renders them “perfect towards God,”⁴¹⁹ (citing Acts 4); that the God of OT is not a Demiurge of Gnosticism, but the same God of NT;⁴²⁰ and that, in fact, the God of OT was preached to the Gentile, Cornelius, and was previously worshipped by him (citing Acts 10).⁴²¹

Decidedly, then, Irenaeus is intent in paragraph 8 of *AH* 3.12, as throughout the chapter, on demonstrating that the apostles consistently presented the God of OT to be the same as the God of NT. It is within this line of argument that the paragraph with which we are concerned comes to bear – i.e. paragraph 8:

8. But again: Whom did Philip preach to the eunuch of the queen of the Ethiopians, returning from Jerusalem, and reading Esaias the prophet, when he and this man were alone together? Was it not He of whom the prophet spoke: “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb dumb before the shearer, so He opened not the mouth?” “But who shall declare His nativity? for His life shall be taken away from the earth.” [Philip declared] that this was Jesus, and that the Scripture was fulfilled in Him; as did also the believing eunuch himself: and, immediately requesting to be baptized, he said, “I believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God.” This man was also sent into the regions of Ethiopia, to preach what he had himself believed, that there was one God preached by the

⁴¹⁸ *AH* 3.12.4 (*ANF* 1:431).

⁴¹⁹ *AH* 3.12.5 (*ANF* 1:431-432).

⁴²⁰ *AH* 3.12.6 (*ANF* 1:432).

⁴²¹ *AH* 3.12.7 (*ANF* 1:432-433).

prophets, but that the Son of this [God] had already made [His] appearance in human nature (*secundum hominem*), and had been led as a sheep to the slaughter; and all the other statements which the prophets made regarding Him.⁴²²

Irenaeus is here primarily concerned with the continuity between the OT and the NT; between the God of the OT and the God of the NT; between God and Jesus. The eunuch's invocation of the Isaiah passage is used to corroborate this. If the OT was not relevant to the NT and to the continued promise of the Christ, then why is the Isaiah quote invoked in this conversion story? Irenaeus seems to be suggesting that it is at the behest of the relevance of the Isaiah quote that the Ethiopian eunuch is impressed to request baptism. He not only leaves charged to be a missionary to his homeland, but also empowered to preach the one God of the OT and NT who spans the two eras in human flesh. This is the force of Irenaeus's anti-Gnostic rhetoric. Indeed, the prophets spoke long ago of the impending lamb that was to come.⁴²³

Irenaeus introduces the Ethiopian as, "the eunuch of the queen of the Ethiopians, returning from Jerusalem, and reading Esaias the prophet".⁴²⁴ Notice that while his ethnoreligious identity is not referred to, it could only be assumed. The summary comment on his status, "the eunuch of the queen", suffices to signal his elitism – Luke's actual quote is more elaborate: "Now there was an Ethiopian

⁴²² AH 3.12.8 (ANF 1:433).

⁴²³ Irenaeus is aiming at the unity of the OT and NT. R. A. Lipsius sets this in context: "Whereas formerly men had been content with the authority of O.T. as the documentary memorial of divine revelation, or with the Lord's own words in addition to the utterances of law and prophets, they now felt more and more impelled, and that by the very example of the Gnostics themselves, to seek a fixed collection of N.T. Scriptures and to extend to them the idea of divine inspiration. The Gnostics in their opposition to O.T., which they supposed to have proceeded from the Demiurge or some subordinate angelic agency, had appealed to writings real or supposed of the apostles as being a more perfect form of divine revelation, and the first point to be established against them was the essential unity of *both* revelations—old and new", R. A. Lipsius, 'Irenaeus', ed. by Henry Mace and William C. Piercy, *A Dictionary of Early Christian Biography and Literature to the End of the Sixth Century A.D., with an Account of the Principal Sects and Heresies* (London: John Murray, 1911), 527.

⁴²⁴ AH 3.12.8 (ANF 1:433).

eunuch, court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury”, (Acts 8:27). Furthermore, there is neither alarm at nor qualification for the notion that the eunuch is both returning from Jerusalem (the capital of Judaism) and reading the Isaiah scroll (a sacred book of the Jews). Irenaeus then posits that Philip has unquestionably identified the subject of the suffering servant motif in Isaiah 53:7, 8 with Jesus Christ: “was it not He of whom the prophet spoke”? The eunuch, in turn, affirms Jesus Christ to be the Son of God (Acts 8:37)⁴²⁵ upon his request for baptism. Finally, the eunuch is discharged to “the regions of Ethiopia to preach what he had himself believed, that there was one God preached by the prophets,” by whom his son, Jesus Christ, came in human nature and is thereby the embodiment of the one God, *contra* Gnostics. But Irenaeus sees the eunuch as the missionary to Ethiopia, and the starting point of the good news that the Ethiopian eunuch proclaims is the suffering Christ. The God incarnate fulfils the purpose of God “led as a sheep to the slaughter”.

Irenaeus considered “the one God preached by the prophets” to be a belief that the eunuch had previously espoused. Though no mention is made of his ethnoreligious identity, it is arguable that it was assumed. This is particularly brought into sharp relief when compared to the previous paragraph about the centurion:

From the words of Peter, therefore, which he addressed in Cæsarea to Cornelius the centurion, and those Gentiles with him, to whom the word of God was first preached, we can understand what the apostles used to preach, the nature of their preaching, and their idea with regard to God. For this Cornelius was, it is said, “a

⁴²⁵ Acts 8:37 is not in the older MSS. It is part of the longer Western recension of Acts. This is noteworthy, as it indicates that Irenaeus was using the longer Western recension. Immediately afterwards he summarises his belief that the Ethiopian eunuch was a missionary to Ethiopia. However, he makes no links with the Western reading of Acts 8:39, from which one may argue a missiological intent.

devout man, and one who feared God with all his house, giving much alms to the people, and praying to God always.⁴²⁶

In *AH* 3.12.7 the ethnoreligious markers of Cornelius of Acts 10 are emphasised: “to Cornelius the centurion [...] a devout man, and one who feared God with all his house”. In contrast to the eunuch, Irenaeus repeats, and thereby foregrounds, Luke’s markers. One, he is referred to as a centurion – by implication a Roman centurion. Two, he is called a Gentile. Three, Irenaeus invokes Acts 10:1-5 and quotes the fact that Cornelius was a God-fearer. Apart from the possible exception of his sexuality, no such markers are invoked for the eunuch of *AH* 3.12.8 despite Luke’s own characterisation.

Nevertheless, there are qualifiers that suggest that the eunuch was not merely acquainted with the Jewish faith but a believer who was intentionally returning from Jerusalem, most likely from a pilgrimage, fully conversant and in allegiance with the language and motif of Isaiah 53 and the Hebrew God. Whether or not the ethnoreligious was ignored or even assumed is impossible to detect at this junction. However, the answer to this question might be helped by an examination of Irenaeus’ second reference to the eunuch in *AH* 4.23.2.⁴²⁷

2.3.1.1.2 *Adversus Haereses* 4.23.2

The second reference is *AH* 4.23.2 (*ANF* 1:494-495). This citation falls within Irenaeus’ attempt in volume four to refute the finer points of Gnosticism in more detail. The chapter is headed, *The Patriarchs and Prophets by Pointing Out the Advent of Christ, Fortified Thereby, as It Were, the Way of Posterity to the Faith of Christ; And So the Labours of the Apostles Were Lessened Inasmuch as They*

⁴²⁶ *AH* 3.12.7

⁴²⁷ *AH* 4.23.2 (*ANF* 1:494-495).

Gathered in the Fruits of the Labours of Others. The paragraph in question is as follows:

2. For this reason, also, Philip, when he had discovered the eunuch of the Ethiopians' queen reading these words which had been written: "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb is dumb before the shearer, so He opened not His mouth: in His humiliation His judgment was taken away;" and all the rest which the prophet proceeded to relate in regard to His passion and His coming in the flesh, and how He was dishonoured by those who did not believe Him; easily persuaded him to believe on Him, that He was Christ Jesus, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and suffered whatsoever the prophet had predicted, and that He was the Son of God, who gives eternal life to men. And immediately when [Philip] had baptized him, he departed from him. For nothing else [but baptism] was wanting to him who had been already instructed by the prophets: he was not ignorant of God the Father, nor of the rules as to the [proper] manner of life, but was merely ignorant of the advent of the Son of God, which, when he had become acquainted with, in a short space of time, he went on his way rejoicing, to be the herald in Ethiopia of Christ's advent. Therefore, Philip had no great labour to go through with regard to this man, because he was already prepared in the fear of God by the prophets. For this reason, too, did the apostles, collecting the sheep which had perished of the house of Israel, and discoursing to them from the Scriptures, prove that this crucified Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God; and they persuaded a great multitude, who, however, [already] possessed the fear of God. And there were, in one day, baptized three, and four, and five thousand men.⁴²⁸

The point of the chapter is that the later apostles, as witnesses of Jesus Christ, did not have to cover as much ground in proselytising Jews *contra* Gentiles since the former already had a foundational belief in the 'one, supreme' God through OT. Irenaeus contrasts this in the succeeding paragraph (AH 4.24.1) with the point that "*The Conversion of the Gentiles Was More Difficult Than that of the*

⁴²⁸ AH 4.23.2

Jews; The Labours of Those Apostles, Therefore Who Engaged in the Former Task, Were Greater Than Those Who Undertook the Latter."⁴²⁹ Here he invokes Paul's quote of I Cor. 15.10, "I laboured more than they all," as suggestive of Paul's work among the Gentiles. This is inevitable for Irenaeus since for the Gentiles, "there was a certain foreign erudition, and a new doctrine [to be received, namely], that the gods of the nations not only were no gods at all, but even the idols of demons."⁴³⁰

Irenaeus is careful, therefore, to position the eunuch in the preceding paragraph (and chapter) that speaks of those who through heritage already were privy to the scriptures. These are invariably Jews. If he meant to include Godfearers or other Jewish sympathisers in this group, he undoubtedly would have singled them out, as he had done in other places.⁴³¹ For Irenaeus, it is clear that those who had cumulative knowledge of the Hebrew God through the Law and the Prophets are more susceptible and amenable to the new Gospel that Jesus Christ is the Messiah to which OT pointed. They have had a head start, as it were.

It is all the more noteworthy, then, that the singular example that Irenaeus gives to make this point is the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch. The eunuch, summarily introduced, like before (*AH* 3.12.8), as "the eunuch of the Ethiopian's queen", already had this cultural-religious knowledge inculcated in him and was thereby predisposed to receive the Messiah of prophecy: "For nothing else [but baptism] was wanting to him who had been already instructed by the prophets: he was not ignorant of God the Father, nor of the rules as to the [proper] manner of life, but was merely ignorant of the advent of the Son of God". This is why "Philip had no great labour to go through with regard to this man, because he

⁴²⁹ This is the heading of *AH* 4.24.1 (*ANF* 1:495)

⁴³⁰ *AH* 4.24.2 (*ANF* 1:495)

⁴³¹ See the Cornelius example, *AH* 3.12.7.

was already prepared in the fear of God by the prophets”. In this guise, the Ethiopian eunuch is an archetype in Acts of diasporic Jews who, faithful to the Hebrew bible and tradition, were open to the saving knowledge (read gnosis) of Jesus Christ.

Irenaeus then links the work done on the Ethiopian eunuch with that of the apostles, who had earlier baptised Jews in their thousands (in Acts 2, 4 & 5). These Jews, like the Ethiopian eunuch, already knew the only one and true God (of the OT) and hence only needed remedial bible studies, as it were, to see (and accept) the direct, divine connectivity with Jesus Christ, for their accession to the ‘Christian church’.

Though Irenaeus did not spell out the fact that the eunuch was a Jew, he strongly infers this: firstly, by the literary context and positioning of his story where he is invoked in apposition and opposite to Gentiles; secondly, by theological argumentation where he is singularly projected as one whose heritage is in OT; and thirdly, by implication and by argument of ethnic reasoning, where he is projected as part of the untarnished ‘sheep of the house of Israel’. It is significant that Irenaeus includes this latter clause in this paragraph, to refer to the Jews who had yet to accept as the fulfilment of OT prophecy, Jesus Christ, the Messiah. This allusion to Matthew 10:6 & 15:24 (“the lost sheep of the house of Israel”) demonstrates Irenaeus’ view not only of the primacy of the Jews in the scheme of Salvation⁴³² but that the eunuch was actually part of the “sheep, which had perished of the house of Israel”. In other words, when reading Irenaeus in context there is no reason why the eunuch cannot be a Jew.⁴³³ Like the thousands of Jews

⁴³² Cf. *AH* 1.24.2; 2.24.6; 3.13.2; 3.23.1; 5.15.2.

⁴³³ Carson misses this point entirely in his insistence that the Eunuch was the first Gentile convert. He simply criticises Irenaeus for making a baseless assumption. And he does the same for Cyprian. Carson, ‘Do You Understand What You Are Reading?’, 154.

who were predisposed for baptism in Acts 2:41 & 4:4, the eunuch had previously “possessed the fear of God” and was similarly predisposed for baptism.

While Irenaeus does not label the Ethiopian eunuch as a Jew, it is clear that his ethnoreligious identity is contradistinctive to the Ethiopian woman cited later, whom Moses married in *AH* 4.20.12:

12.1 However, it was not by means of visions alone which were seen, and words which were proclaimed, but also in actual works, that He was beheld by the prophets, in order that through them He might prefigure and show forth future events beforehand... (6) Thus, too, did Moses also take to wife an Ethiopian woman, whom he thus made an Israelitish one, showing by anticipation that the wild olive tree is grafted into the cultivated olive, and made to partake of its fatness. For as He who was born Christ according to the flesh, had indeed to be sought after by the people in order to be slain, but was to be set free in Egypt, that is, among the Gentiles, to sanctify those who were there in a state of infancy, from whom also He perfected His Church in that place (for Egypt was Gentile from the beginning, as was Ethiopia also); for this reason, by means of the marriage of Moses, was shown forth the marriage of the Word; (7) and by means of the Ethiopian bride, the Church taken from among the Gentiles was made manifest; and those who do detract from, accuse, and deride it, shall not be pure. For they shall be full of leprosy, and expelled from the camp of the righteous.

This woman Irenaeus calls a Gentile. Here, Irenaeus was trying to demonstrate that there are seeds of intentionality cited in the OT that demonstrate that God intended all along to graft the Gentiles in as part of the *bona fide* whole of his people. Significantly, Irenaeus cites an African as a type for the Gentiles who would come later. She, by implication (and in contrast to the Ethiopian eunuch), was not conversant with the God of the Hebrews. She was the “wild olive tree”. By marriage to Moses she was grafted into “the cultivated olive tree”, meaning the commonwealth of Israel. In this way, she is the type for the promise to the Gentiles. Implicitly, her ethnoreligious background does not serve as a barrier to

the ‘ideal type’ of a Gentile. She is viewed positively. In fact, she is the antithesis of impurity, because those who criticise her symbolism – that she is a type for the Gentile church – will be struck with leprosy, as was Miriam, Moses’s sister. The irony here is that the symbolism of blackness (Ethiopian – Αἰθίοψ: the burnt skin) is implicitly idealised as beautiful, and whiteness (leprosy, λεπρέω – Irenaeus uses the verb) as ugly.

Moses’s Ethiopian wife is not only an ideal type for the Gentiles, but for the church, “the bride of Christ”. The Church as a type is derived from “the Ethiopian bride”. The phrase, “Ethiopian bride”, serves ironically to demonstrate how a distant non-Jew in OT can serve as a stark type for God’s church. A similar missional, recapitulation feat is invoked, citing two other women in the same chapter: the wife of Hosea, and Rahab, the harlot, whom Irenaeus also identifies as a Gentile. While Irenaeus employed ethnic reasoning to project the credibility of God’s work of recapitulation, he uses, what I might call, sexual reasoning also. Therefore, through the Ethiopian becoming Moses’s wife, the prostitute wife being impregnated by Hosea, and Rahab, although a harlot, being hospitable to Jewish spies, the church of Christ is recapitulated. Sexual reasoning intersects with ethnic reasoning to effect a typology of the true church.

Given the different kinds of citations of Ethiopians – one a Gentile, the other not – it appears that Irenaeus does not essentialise Ethiopians in terms of their ethnoreligious identity. Africans do not have an undifferentiated monolithic, ethnoreligious identity. For him ethnoreligious identities are fluid and contingent. In the case of his citations, this could be because he was aware that things moved on considerably since the time of Moses and the NT in terms of religious diversity, thereby rendering ethnoreligious identity not as monolithic but constantly in flux – and there are traditions that would account for this much

later, such as the thirteenth-fourteenth century *Kebra Nagast*.⁴³⁴ In which case, it would not be unusual to think that the complexity of diasporic Judaism could well have included Ethiopia in the first and second centuries. If anything, Irenaeus de-essentialises Ethiopia. Ethiopia is not a homogeneously monolithic ethnoreligious kingdom. There could be a spectrum of Jews and Gentiles even among Ethiopians, although there is no concrete, literary evidence of this.

2.3.1.2 Cyprian

The second Church Father who makes Jewish, ethnoreligious allusions to the Ethiopian eunuch is Cyprian. The deacon, Pontius (died c. 260), commenting on the life of Thascius Caecilius Cyprian,⁴³⁵ posited that the eunuch was a Jew. Indeed, unlike Irenaeus before him, he explicitly stated in his biography of Cyprian that the eunuch was a Jew. The account in which he cited this is in *The Life and Passion of Cyprian, Bishop and Martyr* Cyprian.⁴³⁶

Pontius was the student and spiritual son of Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage (248-258),⁴³⁷ under whose bishopric he served as a deacon. Disconcerted at no mentioning of Cyprian's martyrdom hitherto among his peers, Pontius dutifully set out to demonstrate that his mentor was indeed a *bona fide* martyr. It is in his Introduction of *The Life and Passion of Cyprian* that Pontius, at the behest of fellow Christians,⁴³⁸ meticulously argues for this noblest of honour, martyrdom,

⁴³⁴ *Kebra Nagast* is the fourteenth century Ethiopian national epic, which explains the origins of the kingdom through expansions of the OT and NT with many references to patristic theology. Although internal evidence points to a final redaction in the fourteenth century, much of its composition appears to be derived from the sixth century. See David Allen Hubbard, 'The Literary Sources of the Kebra Nagast' (PhD diss., University of St. Andrews, 1956).

⁴³⁵ Known as Thasius Caecilianus Cyprianus. Thasius was his original name, but he took on Caecilianus out of indebtedness to his mentor, the presbyter Caecilianus, who was responsible for his conversion – see J. Patout Burns Jr., *Cyprian the Bishop*. Routledge Early Church Monographs (London: Routledge, 2001), p18.

⁴³⁶ *Cyprian* 1.3 and 3.7-8 (ANF5)

⁴³⁷ Allen Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2.

⁴³⁸ *Cyprian* 1.1

to be noted, since Cyprian, “who, independently of his martyrdom, had much to teach, and that what he did while he lived should [not] be hidden from the world”, (*Cyprian* 1.1). Pontius’s point is that even if Cyprian were not martyred his accomplishments as a Christian were sufficient to warrant being recorded for posterity.

2.3.1.2.1 *Cyprian* 1.3 (ANF 5:268)

Pontius extols the selfless generosity of Cyprian’s dispensing of his huge wealth to the poor upon being baptised as the signature of an enormous spiritual maturity, so significantly marked because it was at the beginning of his faith journey:

By distributing his means for the relief of the indigence of the poor, by dispensing the purchase-money of entire estates, he at once realized two benefits – the contempt of this world’s ambition, than which nothing is more pernicious, and the observance of that mercy which God has preferred even to His sacrifices, and which even he did not maintain who said that he had kept all the commandments of the law; whereby with premature swiftness of piety he almost began to be perfect before he had learnt the way to be perfect. Who of the ancients, I pray, has done this?⁴³⁹

Pontius was confident, that such mature altruism at the beginning of one’s conversion was unprecedented. This, for him, had set the stage for Cyprian’s just and rapid rise through the ranks of the clergy and there was no better analogy to make this point than that of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch. On the outset, in paragraph 3, Pontius dealt with the immediate challenge of Cyprian’s early rise and election to bishopric in Carthage by invoking the biblical text that most represents this challenge, I Timothy 3.6 (NRSV), “He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of

⁴³⁹ *Cyprian*. 1.2 in (ANF 5:268)

the devil”. Pontius seemed to subscribe to this teaching by stating, “that novices should be passed over, lest by the stupor of heathenism that yet clings to their unconfirmed minds, their untaught inexperience should in any respect sin against God”.⁴⁴⁰

However, he saw in Cyprian an exception, in that he presented him as the first Christian to demonstrate that “greater progress is made by faith than by time,”⁴⁴¹ and legitimately so. Cyprian demonstrated enormous, unprecedented faith as a young convert, which probably denoted his unique standing as a notable Christian capacious to take on unusually high offices in quick succession. This was quite a claim to make by Pontius, especially against biblical precedent. Once people were converted and baptised ascendancy into ecclesial office was normally slow, deliberate and cautious. Thus, Pontius needed to find a biblical precedent, which would justify the quick ascendancy of Cyprian. He chose to defend Cyprian’s quick rise by comparing him with the nearest biblical contestant whom he could instantiate, the Ethiopian eunuch, whose baptism and conversion were also seemingly swift:

The apostle’s epistle says that novices should be passed over, lest by the stupor of heathenism that yet clings to their unconfirmed minds, their untaught inexperience should in any respect sin against God. He first, and I think he alone, furnished an illustration that greater progress is made by faith than by time. For although in the Acts of the Apostles the eunuch is described as at once baptized by Philip, because he believed with his whole heart, this is not a fair parallel. For he was a Jew, and as he came from the temple of the Lord he was reading the prophet Isaiah, and he hoped in Christ, although as yet he did not believe that He had come; while the other, coming from the ignorant heathens, began with a faith as mature as that with which few perhaps have finished their course. In short, in respect of God’s grace, there was no

⁴⁴⁰ *Cyprian*. 1.3 (ANF 5:268)

⁴⁴¹ *Cyprian*. 1.3 (ANF 5:268)

delay, no postponement, – I have said but little, – he immediately received the presbyterate and the priesthood.⁴⁴²

Pontius acknowledged that the eunuch's conversion was fairly immediate, but he argued that this was an unfair comparison with Cyprian's case – "this is not a fair parallel." He argued this on the sole concession that the Ethiopian eunuch was a Jew! In other words, both individuals had different beginnings: the eunuch was a Jew and by implication was predisposed for a quick baptism having been steeped in Hebrew tradition – a point that Irenaeus made earlier – whereas on the other hand, Cyprian's background was that of an "ignorant heathen" who, nevertheless, "began with a faith as mature as that with which few perhaps have finished their course".⁴⁴³ Their contrasting beginnings brought into sharp relief the extent of Cyprian's early maturity of faith, which qualified him for his rapid rise in the church in terms of his receipt of the "presbyterate and the priesthood".

What here is of significance, however, is Pontius' explicit ethnoreligious description of the eunuch being a Jew. The Jewish identity of the Ethiopian eunuch qualified him and rendered him eligible for a quick conversion and immediate baptism. His Hebrew heritage made the difference. It placed him, by comparison, at an advantage over Cyprian. Their divergent ethnoreligious identities – ones that carried separate and contradistinctive religio-cultural traditions – separated them and though Cyprian was thereby at a disadvantage, it made his professional ascent all the more remarkable.

Pontius' direct claim concerning the Jewish identity of the Ethiopian eunuch was made *circa* mid-third century. He does not qualify his assertion. It is reasonable

⁴⁴² *Cyprian*. 1.3 (*ANF* 5:268)

⁴⁴³ Curiously, Cyprian's eventual governance as bishop of Carthage was informed by his 'pagan' origins, which he had previously rejected out of hand, most notably the Roman jurisprudence principle that authority can be exercised within a defined, spatially and geographically sacred boundary. See Brent, *Cyprian*, 1.

to assume that both Pontius and his assumed audience shared a social knowledge of what a Jewish ethnoreligious identity conceivably meant. Whether Ethiopians were part of the Jewish ethnoreligious register in the social imagination of Pontius's circle is difficult to establish, but equally difficult to deny.

If Pontius could conceive of the Ethiopian eunuch being a Jew, without qualification, then why can the Ethiopian eunuch not be a Jew? Significantly, the editor of this volume, Arthur Cleveland Coxe (1819-1893), annotates the word 'Jew' with a marginal gloss of two qualifiers.⁴⁴⁴ The first of these is the reference 'proselyte', suggesting that the Ethiopian eunuch was converted to Judaism. There appears to be no plausible rationale for this cross-reference of proselyte at least on three counts. One, the actual word used in the translated Latin (there is no Greek extant copy) is *Judaeum*, which is the accusative singular for *Judaeus*. This is the word for Jew. If Pontius had meant proselyte, he would have used the word, *proselytus*. Hence, the editor was reading his own imagination into the text: the Ethiopian eunuch cannot be a Jew. Two, neither words for Jew or proselyte (or Godfearer, for that matter) exists in the cross-reference biblical texts of Irenaeus, i.e., *ANF* 1:433, to which the editor referred. In other words, Pontius himself does not seek to qualify his reference to the Ethiopian eunuch as a Jew. This is a creation of the editorial gaze. In any case, three, on the basis of the argument aforementioned the editor is seemingly dismissive of the highly plausible, circumstantial evidence, that Pontius could have assumed that the eunuch was a Jew.

Note, *ANF* 1.433 (= *AH* 3.12.8) is the quote that Irenaeus made, instantiating as evidence the Ethiopian eunuch's obsequious use of the Isaiah scroll as indicative of not only there being divine continuity between the Old and New Testaments

⁴⁴⁴ The margin note reads: "A proselyte, rather, known in legends as Indich. Vol. i. p. 433," (*AH* 3.12.8)

but that the God of the OT is the same as the God of the NT. However, the nineteenth century editor's acknowledgement of this reference in his gloss of the Cyprian text further articulates what contemporary scholarship existed within his academic guild that maintained that the ethnoreligious identity of the Irenaeus' citation of the Ethiopian eunuch was understood to be possibly Jewish related, but not Jewish inherited. Perhaps the guild could not see him as a fully-fledged Jew. This is despite Pontius decidedly not qualifying further his designation of the Ethiopian eunuch as other than a Jew. But why could they not? I submit that the racial blind spots in the Eurocentric gaze of the academy obfuscated any other possibility.

Let me explain. Here I invoke the Gadamerian tool of *Wirkungsgeschichte*. The editor's gloss also makes reference to a 'legend' (read tradition) of an obscure name, Indich, without any substantiation. It appears that the 'tradition', putatively held by sixteenth century Ethiopians, was cited in the *Annales Ecclesiastici* (1538–1607, "Ecclesiastical Annals" by Caesar Baronius) – a 13 volume Roman Catholic riposte to a Protestant church history polemic, *Historia Ecclesiae Christi* (History of the Church of Christ), otherwise known as *Centuriae Magdeburgenses* (1559–75; "Magdeburg Centuries"). This reference in the *Annales Ecclesiastici* stated that an Ethiopian diplomat reported that Indich was the Ethiopian eunuch that brought Christianity to Ethiopia. This is revealing on two counts. One, the reference acknowledges and affirms that there was a sixteenth century Ethiopian tradition of missional activity held by the Ethiopian eunuch that is traceable to Irenaeus' claim that the eunuch pioneered missional activity to Ethiopia in the first century. And two, that whatever the currency of the missionary claim, the Ethiopian eunuch could at most be a proselyte, i.e., not

quite fully Jew. For the editor, the Ethiopian eunuch could not be, for an unstated reason, a fully-fledged Jew.⁴⁴⁵

The bigger question is, why cannot the Ethiopian eunuch be a Jew in the editor's conceptuality? Nineteenth century assertions about Jewish proselytes by Jews and Christians alike connoted the idea that such followers were impure, and not quite authentically Jewish. These claims, influenced no less by Moses Hess,⁴⁴⁶ insisted on the biological purity of the Jewish lineage, which together with religion and faith, produced a natural nationalism – a nationalism that pre-empted proper assimilation into any other nation.⁴⁴⁷ Parallel alongside this, but endogenous to the modern project was the rise of white supremacy. By the mid-nineteenth century, race theory grew to its heights, boasting proponents such as Kant, Bruno Bauer, and Renan.⁴⁴⁸ The watershed came with the 1850 publication of Robert Knox's *The Races of Men*.⁴⁴⁹ Two years later came James W. Redfield's *Comparative Physiognomy; Or, Resemblances between Men and Animals*.⁴⁵⁰ In

⁴⁴⁵ In any case, as alluded to before, the ethnoreligious landscape of Judaism in the first century was quite variegated yet fluid. This could even apply to use of terminologies such as proselytes and Godfearers. Martin Goodman argues that there were possibly two ways in which the term (and perhaps phenomenon of) proselytes were used in the first century: one, to describe technically a Jewish convert; and two to describe semi-technically a Jew who has been converted by Pharisees to follow the halakha. He reads the latter meaning into the imprecation of Jesus against Pharisees in Matthew 23.15 ("you travel across sea and land to make a proselyte, and when you achieve this you make him twice as much a son of Gehenna as you are"). See Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (London; New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 70–4.

⁴⁴⁶ Moses Hess, *Rome and Jerusalem: A Study in Jewish Nationalism*, trans. by Meyer Waxman (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1918); Ken Koltun-Fromm, *Moses Hess and Modern Jewish Identity* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 105, 124. A typical example of a Christian ally of Hess's racial theory, though anonymously, was Bruno Bauer. See Jacob Katz, *Jewish Emancipation and Self-Emancipation* (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1986), 145–46.

⁴⁴⁷ Gabriel Sheffer, 'Is the Jewish Diaspora Unique?', in *Contemporary Jewries: Convergence and Divergence*, ed. by Eliezer Ben Rafael, Yosef Gorni, and Yaacov Ro'i (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 33; John M. Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994).

⁴⁴⁸ Paul Lawrence Rose, *German Question/Jewish Question: Revolutionary Antisemitism in Germany from Kant to Wagner* (Cambridge: Princeton University Press, 2014), 13–22, 91–116, 296–305. For an excellent analysis of Kant's racial vision and theory, see Carter, *Race*, 79–121.

⁴⁴⁹ Robert Knox, *The Races of Men: A Fragment* (Philadelphia, PN: Lea & Blanchard, 1850).

⁴⁵⁰ James W. Redfield, *Comparative Physiognomy; Or, Resemblances between Men and Animals* (New York:

Germany, a parallel development was occurring with Carl Gustav Carus leading the way with his publication: *Symbolik der menschlichen Gestalt: Ein Handbuch zur Menschenkenntniss*.⁴⁵¹ These and multiple more defined the context of Euromodernity and formed the cultural epistemology of whiteness, into which positions on race were dynamically constructed.

Coxe, I would argue, was a child of his age. He too espoused race thinking. See, for example, his quote in defence of the KJV in 1857:

The Holy Scriptures as translated in the reign of King James the First, are the noblest heritage of the Anglo-Saxon race. Contemporary with the rise of colonial emigration from the great hive of parent life and enterprise, the English Bible, of that epoch, would seem designed, by Providence, to be the parting blessing of the Mother of Nations, to her adventurous progeny.⁴⁵²

The KJV is positioned as both the preeminent production and legacy of the “Anglo-Saxon race”. Its production is linked to the greatness and no doubt supremacy of the ‘race’ of Anglo-Saxons. Its legacy is bequeathed to the ‘grateful’ colonies of their subjugated empire for posterity. Indeed, the “adventurous progeny” are by implication racialised too. They are the racialised ‘Other’. In this sense, Ethiopia would constitute ‘the Other’. It is difficult to conceive of Coxe, as editor of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* series, being untouched by his imperialist

Scholarly Publishing Office, University of Michigan Library, 2006).

⁴⁵¹ Carl Gustav Carus, *Symbolik der menschlichen Gestalt: Ein handbuch zur Menschenkenntniss, Zweite Auflage* (New York: Nabu Press, 2010). See also his previous volume: Carl Gustav Carus, *Psyche: On the Development of the Soul - Part 1: The Unconscious*, trans. by Renata Welch (Thompson, Conn.: Spring Publications, inc., 2015), which is a translation of *Psyche: Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Seele* (Stuttgart: C.P. Scheitlin, 1851). For a compendium of books published in German during this time see Wulf D. Hund, Christian Koller, and Moshe Zimmermann, *Racisms Made in Germany* (Zürich; Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2011). For an account of how theology played a significant role in antisemitism, see Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*.

⁴⁵² Arthur Cleveland Coxe, *An Apology for the Common English Bible; And a Review of the Extraordinary Changes Made in It by Managers of the American Bible Society* (Baltimore; New York: J. Robinson and Dana & Company, 1857), 5.

sensibilities and context. His race thinking cannot be far away from his charitable gaze of the Ethiopian eunuch in the Cyprian text. He is being charitable because he awards the Ethiopian eunuch the status of a proselyte. Then again, he cannot do otherwise. To suggest that the Ethiopian eunuch was a Gentile would amount to complete erasure of the Cyprian text. The text at least says that the Ethiopian eunuch was a *Jew*. But for Coxe, he cannot be a *fully-fledged Jew*.

Coxe's editorial gloss carries a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it feeds into the contemporary myth of supersessionism that the Gentile 'race' replaced the Jewish 'race' as the chosen people. In this guise, the Ethiopian eunuch was not one of them (Jews), but then again, he was not fully one of us (Christians) – 'us' being the ideal Graeco-Roman Gentile type. He is somewhere in-between. On the other hand, the Ethiopian eunuch could not be purely Jewish – the chosen race. He is still the Ethiopian other, not a proper Jew, but, at best, syncretic, theologically and racially, because of his contact with the 'uncivilised' sub-Saharan Africa of the "adventurous progeny". Race is here being mobilised in order to articulate an identity politics of ethnoreligious purity. Yet its mobilisation is uneven, unstable and porous to ensure the supremacy of whiteness.

In sum, whatever the ethnoreligious landscape of first century Judaism, Cyprian conceived – maybe taking his cue from Irenaeus before him, as there are other allusions to the Irenaeus text – of the Ethiopian eunuch as being a Jew.

2.3.2 The Graeco-Gentile Identity of the Ethiopian eunuch

After Cyprian, there is a clear shift in the identity of the Ethiopian eunuch to a Graeco-Roman or sometime ambivalent ethnoreligious ideal type. By this time, and in the regions represented, the *Adversus Judaeos* phenomenon was in full, unbridled flow. The Church Fathers were united in trying to affect clear

ideological water between Judaism (and Jewish/Judaising Christianity) and Christianity. This undergirded the push for Christianity to resolve around the ideal type of the Graeco-Roman Gentile Christian, even if it meant revising the history of Christianity's roots and origins – whether consciously or unconsciously. It is during the escalation of the *Adversus Judaeos* tradition, though disproportionate and uneven, that we find the Church Fathers wrestling with ethnoreligious identities of their fellow Christian ancestors by means of ethnic reasoning. But it would appear that ethnic reasoning was itself driven in a sense by tribal reasoning to render Christianity distinctly superior to Judaism.

2.3.2.1 Eusebius

Eusebius Pamphili (263-339) became bishop of Caesarea in 314 and was important to the work of the Emperor Constantine in the shaping of the Roman Empire.⁴⁵³ For him “the Christian message was now being announced to ‘all men and to every nation’” (Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* 1.2.17). In fact, it is in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* (c. 324) that he sought to catalogue the history of the church from the time of Luke-Acts to his present day. Here Eusebius scrupulously constructs his rationalisation of the origins of Christianity to be the replacement of Judaism. It is the first comprehensive argument for supersessionism. His voice undoubtedly carried the stamp of imperial authority.

We encounter the Ethiopian eunuch in his Book 2 where he records the history of the Apostolic period from its inception to the destruction of Jerusalem (70) – from Tiberius to Nero, to demonstrate the reliable continuity of God's appointment in his Church since Christ. In reading his account, it is helpful to bear in mind another parallel composition of his: *Praeparatio Evangelica* (313-

⁴⁵³ Timothy David Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1981), examines the contribution Eusebius, representing the heart of Christianity, made to the Roman world under Constantine.

324).⁴⁵⁴ It is an apology⁴⁵⁵ aimed at constructing a unique Christian tribal identity, by means of ethnic reasoning, that would be seen to exceed all other religious identities. Aaron Johnson, in his critique of ethnicity in *Praeparatio* suggests:

Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica* ... stands as the most sustained and comprehensive work in this tradition, a monument to the literary battles fought over the contested field of identity in Greek antiquity.⁴⁵⁶

Praep. ev. is so strategic for Eusebius, that it informs the cultural tapestry of all his other works, especially when they address the topic of Christian supremacy. It is in light of this supersessionism by ethnic reasoning – the product of the *Adversus Judaeos* tradition – that we analyse his reference to the Ethiopian eunuch in *Church History*.

2.3.2.1.1 *Historia Ecclesiastica* 2.1.13

Volume 2 of *Historia Ecclesiastica* takes its cue from the beginning of Acts of the Apostles with the replacement of Judas the disciple by Matthias (1.26). Eusebius then charts the advancement of the church through the actions of significant leaders: Stephen who was martyred (*Hist. eccl.* 2.1.1); (bishop) James the Just, who was beaten to death (2.1.2-4);⁴⁵⁷ James, who was beheaded (2.1.4); Thomas, then Thaddeus, who was sent to Edessa as a missionary (2.1.5-7); the mission of the disciples other than the twelve (2.1.8); Paul the persecutor (2.1.9); Philip in

⁴⁵⁴ Aaron P. Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument in Eusebius' Praeparatio Evangelica* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁴⁵⁵ Τὸν χριστιανισμόν, ὃ τι ποτέ ἐστίν, ἡγούμενος οὐκ εἰδόσι παραστήσασθαι [...] (*Praeparatio* 1.1.1); "I have wanted to present Christianity – whatever it is – to those who are ignorant."

⁴⁵⁶ Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument in Eusebius*, vii. Johnson notes that his method of analysis, ethnic argumentation, is similar to Buell's ethnic reasoning and "Byron's ethno-political rhetoric [sic.]", (p. 10, n. 43).

⁴⁵⁷ Eusebius is careful to cite his literary sources when moving outside of the bible (cf. 2.1.3-8).

Samaria (2.1.10); the chicanery of Simon Magus (2.1.11); and the legacy of Simon Magus (2.1.12). It is in 2.1.13 where Eusebius's reference to the eunuch is encountered, alluding to Acts 8:26-40:

But as the preaching of the Saviour's Gospel was daily advancing, a certain providence led from the land of the Ethiopians an officer of the queen of that country, for Ethiopia even to the present day is ruled, according to ancestral custom [ἔθος], by a woman. He, first among the Gentiles [πρῶτον ἐξ ἔθνων], received of the mysteries of the divine word from Philip in consequence of a revelation, and having become the first-fruits of believers [πιστῶν ἀπαρχήν] throughout the world [ἀνὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην], he is said to have been the first on returning to his country to proclaim the knowledge of the God of the universe and the life-giving sojourn of our Saviour among men;⁴⁵⁸ so that through him in truth the prophecy obtained its fulfillment, which declares that "Ethiopia stretcheth out her hand unto God."

Eusebius explicitly identifies the Ethiopian eunuch as the first converted Gentile of the Christian church (πρῶτον ἐξ ἔθνων, "first among the Gentiles"). As if to make this abundantly clear he also refers to him as "the first fruits of all believers throughout the world" (τε ἀνὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην πιστῶν ἀπαρχὴν γενόμενον). In fact, for Eusebius, the Ethiopian scores three firsts: the first Gentile, the first fruits of all believers, and the first missionary to Ethiopia. Central to these firsts is the claim that the Ethiopian eunuch is a Gentile. His conversion radically inscribes his identity.

'Gentile' (ἔθνος) is a signifier of ethnic reasoning. Notwithstanding, ἔθνος normally connotes the idea of nation and peoplehood. It is normally expressed in NT in the plural (τὰ ἔθνη) to refer to 'the nations' as it is in 2.1.13. Borrowed from LXX

⁴⁵⁸ There is a gloss in the margin (n. 263) that remarks: "Irenaeus (*AH* III. 12. 8) says that this eunuch returned to Ethiopia and preached there. But by no one else, so far as I know, is the origin of Christianity in Ethiopia traced back to him. The first certain knowledge we have of the introduction of Christianity into Ethiopia is in the fourth century, under Frumentius and Aedesius, of whom Rufinus, I. 9, gives the original account; and yet it is probable that Christianity existed there long before this time".

usage, the plural inflection serves to mark the Gentiles as ethnoreligiously different. However, one should hesitate to apply the notion of nationhood to ancient texts, as nationhood is really a modern construct. Peoplehood is preferred. Nevertheless, ἔθνος/ ἔθνη carries the idea of an ethnic group, and especially in this context, that of a shared peoplehood and Christian culture with a new corporate identity.⁴⁵⁹ This new ‘people’ is indestructible because of the divine connectivity in Jesus Christ (1.4.2).⁴⁶⁰ It appears that the Ethiopian is caught in the crossfire of Christian origins reconfiguration. Eusebius is determined to set the record straight regarding the primacy of the Christian church. The displacement of the Jews as God’s favoured people is necessary for the new history. Thus, any notable conversion story in Acts, where the ethnoreligious identity is not spelled out, is claimed by Eusebius as a Gentile conversion.

Eusebius is keen to invoke the Psalm 68:31 prophecy: “let Ethiopia hasten to stretch out its hands to God Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hand”. In light of his grand strategy to appeal to Constantine and demonstrate that the Christian church is indeed fulfilling its God given destiny Ethiopia just like the other ethnic nations mentioned in the paragraph – Edessa (*Hist. eccl.* 2.1.5-7); Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch (2.1.8); and Samaria (2.1.10-11) – are forging their new

⁴⁵⁹ Some classicists may refer to ἔθνος as ethnos-states. See Catherine Morgan, ‘Ethnicity and Early Greek States: Historical and Material Perspectives’, *The Cambridge Classical Journal* 37 (1992), 131–163. Others prefer the term, ethnic-states. See, for example, Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Waco, TX: Wiley, 1991), 140–44.

⁴⁶⁰ The whole quote of *Hist. eccl.* 1.4.2 is useful: “It is admitted that when in recent times the appearance of our Saviour Jesus Christ had become known to all men there immediately made its appearance a new nation; a nation confessedly not small, and not dwelling in some corner of the earth, but the most numerous and pious of all nations, indestructible and unconquerable, because it always receives assistance from God. This nation, thus suddenly appearing at the time appointed by the inscrutable counsel of God, is the one which has been honored by all with the name of Christ”.

Christian identity. This evidence serves to strengthen the vanguardist position of Constantinian's Christian church.

Of interest is the intersection of ἔθνη (Gentiles) with ἔθος (custom) in 2.1.13, when looked at through ethnic reasoning. Eusebius does not discount nor discredit the Ethiopian's ancestral custom or culture. Instead, he conceives of the Ethiopian eunuch returning home to his homeland of customs and practices but expects him to Christianise his homeland of customs and practices: "to proclaim the knowledge of the God of the universe and the life-giving sojourn of our Saviour among men". In this way, Ethiopia will stretch forth her hand into her true Christian identity. The ἔθος was not expected to Ethiopianise or indigenise Christianity and thereby forge a different identity. The new Christian identity had to maintain its pole, universalising authority and maintain its expansionist project.

The passage of Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 2.1.13) tellingly contributes to his ideological efforts to have the Church legitimised and universalised under Constantine. Eusebius does not reject the Roman Empire and its rulers. He schemes that there are good emperors and bad emperors. Constantine is projected as the best emperor and the proven, justified heir as the custodian of a new universal, ethnic Christianity – the new οἰκουμένη. It is with this in mind that Eusebius composed the *Life of Constantine*, which he wrote right up to his death, where he extolled the virtue of Constantine. Constantine died 337. Of particular interest is how Eusebius conceives Ethiopia's role in Constantine's ascendancy. Ethiopia will succumb in obsequiousness to Constantine (*Vit. Const.* 1.8.3); and Ethiopia will pay homage to Constantine with gifts (4.7.1 – Note how Eusebius employs ethnic reasoning to invoke Homer's quote of Ethiopia along with India: "who are twain-parted last of men" [Homer *Od.* 1.23]).

In sum, through the analytics of supersessionism by means of ethnic reasoning, Eusebius argues for a supremacist Christian church. He picks his way through Acts in order to authenticate his ideological project. The (Graeco-)Gentile Christian is idealised against whose benchmark the Ethiopian eunuch is heralded as the archetypal, ideal type. His ethnoreligious agency indeed becomes the ‘property’ of proto-whiteness, in Harris’s sense of the word, with property rights to be the first Graeco-Gentile Christian convert.⁴⁶¹ Yet, in light of the *Life of Constantine*, Eusebius views the Ethiopian eunuch’s ethnic identity with some suspicion. His agency is somewhat circumscribed, which leads to the possible conclusion, without sounding reductionist, that the subjectivity of the Ethiopian eunuch is manipulatively instrumentalised to serve as a function of a universalist, hegemonic ideology.

2.3.2.2 Ephraem Syrus

Ephraem Syrus (306-373), from the eastern part of the Roman Empire and a Syriac deacon, is known for his hymns, poetry and sermons in verse. In his fifties, sometime after the death of Constantine, he wrote a series of hymns that defended the Nicene orthodoxy that Constantine had sponsored. This is an important text as its political subtext intimates the connectivity between the theology of the East with the West. Ephraem was natively attuned with the religio-political currents of his day. As with the key players caught in the cross-currents of Jewish-Christian relations, he waxes lyrical in anti-Jewish rhetoric (*psogos*), even if Christine Shephardson argues that Ephraem’s anti-Jewish *psogos* was not necessarily aimed at Jews, but at obstinate Christians.⁴⁶²

⁴⁶¹ See n. 105.

⁴⁶² Christine Shephardson, *Anti-Judaism and Christian Orthodoxy: Ephrem’s Hymns in Fourth-Century Syria*. Patristic Monograph Series 20 (Washington, DC: CUA Press, 2008). Shephardson admits to Ephraem’s vitriol invectives, but demonstrates that given the universality of his intonations, he is, on the main, aiming at the anti-Trinitarians – Jews and Judaisers – of the Nicene Creed.

2.3.2.2.1 Hymn 3.2

The text where reference to the Ethiopian eunuch is found is within a collection of hymns known as *The Hymns on Faith*⁴⁶³ or *The Pearl*. In *Hymn 3.2* he writes in fine poetry:

1. Thou dost not hide thyself in thy bareness, O pearl! With the love of thee is the merchant ravished also, for he strips off his garments; not to cover thee, [seeing] thy clothing is thy light, thy garment is thy brightness, O thou that art bared!

Thou art like Eve who was clothed with nakedness. Cursed be he that deceived her and stripped her and left her. The serpent cannot strip off thy glory. In the mysteries whose type thou art, women are clothed with Light in Eden.

2. Very glistening are the pearls of Ethiopia, as it is written, Who gave thee to Ethiopia [the land] of black men. He that gave light to the Gentiles, both to the Ethiopians and unto the Indians did His bright beams reach.

The eunuch of Ethiopia upon his chariot saw Philip: the Lamb of Light met the dark man from out of the water. While he was reading, the Ethiopian was baptised and shone with joy, and journeyed on!

He made disciples and taught, and out of black men he made men white. And the dark Ethiopic women became pearls for the Son; He offered them up to the Father, as a glistening crown from the Ethiopians.

In this hymn, Ephraem alludes to and allegorises his imagery from the parable of the Pearl of Great Price (Matthew 13.45-46). The pearl is announced as a sparkling light of what is trans-temporal glory. Using sexual reasoning, the pearl is feminised yet objectified as something to be admired and possessed, where Eve is projected as the pure paragon of innocence. The pearl's shrouded light is associated with mystery. However, it is not altogether clear what or whom the pearl represents. In an earlier hymn (*Hymn for the Feast of the Epiphany*), *Hymn 1.18*, the pearl is associated with baptism: "Again, the diver brings up – out of the

⁴⁶³ Hymns on Faith were likely to have been composed after 363 in Edessa.

sea the pearl. Be baptized and bring up from the water – purity that therein is hidden”. Yet, in the next breath, it seemingly has a further association: “the pearl that is set as a jewel--in the crown of the Godhead”. There are strong associations with the divine being.

However, in the first hymn of the *Pearls* the pearl appears to be the essence of the goodness of the Son of God: “On a certain day a pearl did I take up, my brethren; I saw in it mysteries pertaining to the Kingdom; semblances and types of the Majesty; it became a fountain, and I drank out of it mysteries of the Son”, (*Hymn* 1.1). In which case, Ephraem is extolling the second person of the Godhead to be truly divine. Notwithstanding, it is quite possible that the pearl represents the kingdom of God as in the parable. Then there is no direct reference to the pearl before a different collection of hymns known as the Pearl, of which our particular concern is *Hymn* 3.

After *Hymn* 3.1, the juxtaposing of the pearl with Eve, the Ethiopian motif is introduced. Given the direct reference to his phenotype (“the land of black men”) and nationality “Ethiopian”, there is clear ethnic reasoning in order to demonstrate the irresistible power of the pull of Christianity, made possible by the beatific pearl. The reference to Ethiopia and India is an allusion to Eusebius’s *Life of Constantine* 4.7.1, probably indicating that Christianity has reached the outer limits of the world – “the end of the earth” (cf. Acts 1:8).⁴⁶⁴

The biblical binary references to “light” and “dark” are a popular literary play on the polar notions of righteous and sin, salvation and damnation, purity and impurity. ‘Light’ is idealised as aspirational and ‘dark’ devalued as undesirable. And these are deposited on the surface of the skin as essentialising identities. The

⁴⁶⁴ Strabo 1.2.28. Strabo posits that Ethiopia and India occupy two of the four outermost corners of the world.

identities are not reified, however. They are not closed, fixed and immutable. They are changeable, flexible and transmutable. They can be put off or put on. This is the kind of change baptism can produce. One's skin can be transfigured, where black men become white and women become pearls. This ethnic reasoning is integral to constructing a new Christian humanity, even for the Queen of Sheba passage that follows.⁴⁶⁵

Ephraem is the first to locate the epistemology of righteousness and sin as white and black on the epidermis of the Ethiopian eunuch.⁴⁶⁶ However, there are others before him who invoked this kind of ethnic reasoning. Byron traces and evaluates a number of these moralising colour-symbolic rhetorics from Aristotle's⁴⁶⁷ pejorative view of Ethiopians,⁴⁶⁸ to Pseudo-Callisthenes's third century report⁴⁶⁹ of Candace's hosting of the visit of Alexander the Great,⁴⁷⁰ to the fourth-century Latin poet Ausonius⁴⁷¹ about his grandmother.⁴⁷² Origen, in his allegorisation of

⁴⁶⁵ "The Queen of Sheba was a sheep that had come into the place of wolves; the lamp of truth did Solomon give her, who also married her when he fell away. She was enlightened and went away, but they were dark as their manner was. The bright spark which went down home with that blessed [Queen], held on its shining amid the darkness, till the new Day-spring came. The bright spark met with this shining, and illumined the place", (*Hymn* 3.3).

⁴⁶⁶ Notice how the black body could be parodied as sin worthy of death, the means of redemption of which is baptism. Orlando Patterson theorises how, much later on, the black body in Euromodernity has become of site of social death, where it is seen as both liable and dispensable. See Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982). In which case, could the spiritualizing of blackness as symbolic of sin and death be an anticipative trope for the much later symbol of social death?

⁴⁶⁷ Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference*, 35.

⁴⁶⁸ Aristotle, *Physiognomies* 6, 812b: "Those who are too black (agan melanes ἀγάν μελανής) are cowards; this applies to Egyptians and Ethiopians (Aigyptious, Aithiopas Αἰγυπτίους Αἰθιοπας). But the excessively white are also cowardly; witness women. But the complexion that tends to courage is in between these two".

⁴⁶⁹ Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference*, 36.

⁴⁷⁰ Pseudo-Callisthenes, *Historia Alexandri Magni*, 3.18.6: "We are whiter and brighter in our souls than the whitest of you". Notice how the physiognomy is contrasted with the soul through ethnic reasoning.

⁴⁷¹ Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference*, 37.

⁴⁷² Ausonius, *Parentalia* 5.3–6. "Her name was given her in play, because of her dark (fusca) complexion she was called Maura in old days by her girl-friends. But she was not dark in her soul (atra animo), which was whiter (candidior) than a swan and brighter than untrodden snow." Again, notice how physiognomy is contrasted with the soul through ethnic reasoning.

Songs of Solomon 1:5-6, struggled with the dilemma of likening the church to the beauty of an Ethiopian woman:

We ask in what way is she black and in what way fair without whiteness. She has repented of her sins; conversion has bestowed beauty upon her and she is sung as 'beautiful'. If you repent, your soul will be 'black' because of your former sins, but because of your penitence your soul will have something of what I may call an Ethiopian beauty.⁴⁷³

Origen's ethnic reasoning is sexualised by its being compounded by his draw on the desire of "Ethiopian beauty". Normally, blackness is aligned with sin, but the Ethiopian woman in the text is for him an Ethiopian beauty. The contradiction places him in a dilemma as to what to compare the church with. He appears to opt for complexity. In this sense, the black/white binary is not securely fixed along moralistic lines. It is slippery, indistinct and flexible. While Elaine Pagels does not articulate the complexity of race-thinking in these terms, she does recognise the ambiguity implicit in Origen's *Commentarius in Canticum* (2.1.56),⁴⁷⁴ pointing out that Origen did not believe that dark-skinned people were inherently sinful.⁴⁷⁵

In sum, the biblical, binary symbols of darkness and light are adopted and inscribed upon the Ethiopian eunuch's body, but not in an epistemological vacuum. Ephraem's social knowledge was probably inscribed by the ethnoreligious orientalism of the day. This is why the Ethiopian eunuch's body was probably corrected by the religio-political gaze of Ephraim as a method of

⁴⁷³ Origen, *Hom. Cant.* 1.6

⁴⁷⁴ Origen, *Com. Cant.*, "one may say of any soul that it is black by reason of sin, yet beautiful by reason of repentance" (2.1.56).

⁴⁷⁵ Elaine H. Pagels, 'The Shape-Shifting Bride: Reflecting on Race and Ethnicity in Origen's Exegesis of the Song of Songs', in *A Most Reliable Witness: Essays in Honor of Ross Shepard Kraemer*, ed. by Susan Ashbrook Harvey and others, Brown Judaic Studies, 358 (Providence, RI: Brown University, 2015), 240.

socio-religious ordering. In this way, the othering of the Ethiopian black skin is reconciled.

2.3.2.3 John Chrysostom

John Chrysostom (c. 349 – 407), Bishop of Antioch, so named because of his reputation for eloquent oratory (Chrysostom means ‘golden tongue’),⁴⁷⁶ was particularly known for his skilful use of *psogos* rhetoric against the Jews. It was especially acidic, given that he was not an insider, but an outsider and stranger to Judaism, indeed, an opponent. This is particularly the case in his compositions of *Eight Homilies Against the Jews* otherwise known as *Adversus Judaeos* (386-387).⁴⁷⁷ In it he castigated Jewish Christians as well as Judaising Christians for not desisting from following traditionally Jewish practices.⁴⁷⁸ He did this as part of a wider effort to sever the relationship between the Christian and the Jews once and for all.⁴⁷⁹ He was keen to have Christianity part ways with its by now unacknowledged mother, Judaism.

However, the texts where the Ethiopian eunuch is instantiated are not part of Chrysostom’s *Adversus Judaeos*. They are found in a series of homilies. The *Homilies* are a collection of expositions or running commentaries on different

⁴⁷⁶ J. N. D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom - Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 4.

⁴⁷⁷ Yohanan (Hans) Lewy, ‘John Chrysostom’, ed. by Fred Skolnik, *Encyclopaedia Judaica: JA-KAS* (Farmington Hills, MI: Macmillan, 2007), 382.

⁴⁷⁸ Wayne Meeks disagrees with Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel* (Paris: Boccard, 1948), 256–64, that Chrysostom was aggressive in his language because of Jewish proselytisation among the Christians. Yes, Chrysostom did quote, “The Jews, worse than any wolves, prepare at the approach of their festivals to attack the flock” (4.1, 871B), however, Meeks maintains that this was an exception. Meeks holds that Chrysostom “sometimes is carried away by his own metaphors; in one of the last of the anti-Jewish homilies he admits to his congregation that, like a gentle animal that has acquired the taste for human blood, he has come to lust for combat against the Jews (6.1, 903B)”. See Wayne A. Meeks and Robert Louis Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch in the First Four Centuries of the Common Era*, SBL Sources for Biblical Study, 13 (Missoula, MO: Scholars Press, 1978), 32.

⁴⁷⁹ A. Lukyn Williams, *Adversus Judaeos: A Bird’s-Eye View of Christian Apologiae Until the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), 133–34.

books of the bible.⁴⁸⁰ Chrysostom made a habit of instantiating the Ethiopian eunuch as a paragon of earnestness and commitment. However, there are three texts where the Ethiopian eunuch is cited with respect to ethnoreligious signifiers.⁴⁸¹ The first is *Homily 1* of the *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans*.⁴⁸²

2.3.2.3.1 Homily 1 on Acts 1:1-2

Homily 1 is the introductory sermon to the book of Acts, expositing Acts 1:1-2. It is during a section on baptism that Chrysostom identifies the Ethiopian eunuch as a barbarian (βάρβαρος): “Whereas that Eunuch, barbarian as he was and on a journey, yea on the very highway, he did not seek for a set time [to be baptised]”.⁴⁸³

It is not unequivocally clear as to how Chrysostom is using barbarian here. He could be distinguishing the non-speaking Hellenes (as Paul in 1 Cor. 14:11)⁴⁸⁴ from the Hellenes, in the classical sense. This would be in keeping with his usage in *Homily 9* on Acts 3:12: “By our mouth and tongue let us be known, in the first place, just as the barbarians are by theirs: even as those who speak Greek are distinguished from barbarians, so let us be known”. In which case, the reference would be one of highlighting difference. The question is, however, whether the difference is ethno-politically symmetrical. I think not. There is the sense that the

⁴⁸⁰ It should be noted that the collections of homilies were largely written down by Chrysostom’s members in an effort to preserve his virtuoso homiletical performances. See, Lewy, ‘John Chrysostom’, 382.

⁴⁸¹ There is also a reference to his ethno-political standing in *Homily 12* on Philippians 3.13, 14. Here the Ethiopian eunuch is instantiated as an example of a wealthy elite who was not overcome by his riches: “Wouldest thou see men saved in the rank of a soldier? There is Cornelius; and in the government of a household? There is the eunuch of the Ethiopian Queen.”

⁴⁸² *Homily 1* (NPNF 1:11).

⁴⁸³ *Homily on Acts 1:1-2*, p. 9.

⁴⁸⁴ “Unless, then, I know the meaning of the sound, I will a barbarian to the one speaking, and he a Barbarian to me”

ethno-political difference is asymmetrical, which would be in keeping with his comments in *Homily* 37 on Acts 17:1-3:

“If we see one, let us deliver up to the ruler, (that is), to conscience (τῷ νῷ), that imagination which is indeed an alien, a barbarian, albeit tricked out with the garb of a citizen. For there are within us many imaginations of this kind, which are by nature indeed enemies, but are clad in sheep’s skins”.

The focus of the *Homily* 1 is absorbed with maintaining unity in the church. It is a unity that is intolerant of “foreign” or “spurious doctrine”. Chrysostom compares such infiltrates as spies in a city who need to undergo severe tests (βασάνους) – the translators of *NPNF* prefer the intensified term, ‘torture’. And these spies are, no less, Judaisers. Ironically, the Jews are here cast as Barbarians. In which case, Chrysostom is connoting the pejorative sense of “wild,” “crude,” “fierce,” and “uncivilised”,⁴⁸⁵ where the Jew is orientalised and othered as inferior and distasteful.

In light of this pejorative description, the Ethiopian eunuch is also othered. He is othered through ethnic reasoning as a means to admonish the congregants of the virtue of baptism and that one should not need to hesitate with or put off baptism. The point is, if a barbarian upon seeing the relevance of baptism could not wait how much more should the Graeco-Roman Gentile be keen to be baptised. This juxtaposition of barbarian with Gentile is brought into sharper relief when taken into consideration Chrysostom’s other comparison in making the same point. He instantiates the story of the jailor who imprisoned Paul (Acts 16.22-34), but who also did not hesitate to believe, and by implication for Chrysostom, was thence baptised.⁴⁸⁶ If the jailor, being a Greek, did not hesitate

⁴⁸⁵ Hans Windisch, ‘Βάρβαρος’, *TDNT*, 1:548. The entry is not found in *PGL*.

⁴⁸⁶ *Homily on Acts* 1:1-2 (*NPNF* 1:11): “nor the jailor, though he was in the midst of a set of prisoners, and the teacher [Paul] he saw before him was a man scourged and in chains, and whom he was still to have in

either, how much more should Chrysostom's congregants, themselves Greeks, not hesitate. Indeed, ethnic reasoning is explicitly used to privilege the importance of the Graeco-Roman Gentile type getting baptised.

2.3.2.3.2 Homily 19 on Acts 8:26-40

The second citation of the Ethiopian eunuch is in *Homily 19* on Acts 8:26-40. This is the longest of the three citations. The sermon is not aimed at the Jews, but his Christian congregants. Here, he rehearses the entire story of Acts 8.26-40 with glosses, embellishments and annotations, though not without a dig at the Jews.⁴⁸⁷ There is no need to reprise the entire sermon here, as it begins with a close reading of the actual story with minimal glosses, before recapitulating it with significant exposition and extrapolation. Suffice to say, that he lauds the Ethiopian eunuch for his interest: "High encomiums for the man, that he, residing in Ethiopia and beset with so much business, and when there was no festival going on, and living in that superstitious (δεισιδαίμωνι) city, came 'to Jerusalem for to worship'". He goes onto say that the Ethiopian eunuch is "studious", a man of "piety", of "eager desire", and of "exact knowledge". The "superstitious" (δεισιδαίμων) city to which he is referring is probably Meröe of the Kingdom of Ethiopia. Chrysostom's dim view of Ethiopia ties in with his views of Ethiopians.

Again, ethnic (or perhaps, more aptly in this case, ethnopolitical) reasoning is employed to relegate the Ethiopian's civilisation to a place that is far-flung and distant. By doing so the ethnoreligious chasm that the Ethiopian has to cross in order to become a Christian is exaggerated for effect, to demonstrate his fierce determination and readiness to become baptised. This interpretation coheres

his custody".

⁴⁸⁷ A pejorative example is: "He [Philip] would not have gone southwards... so that there is no fear of an attack from the Jews" (*Homily 19* on Acts 8:26).

with Chrysostom's last remark that the eunuch is by association a heathen, and by implication, on first appearance, a Gentile. In Chrysostom's gaze, the eunuch was an exemplary heathen, who got converted. This is in spite of Chrysostom allegorical treatment of the eunuch reading the bible.

2.3.2.3.3 Discourse 3.3

Discourse 3.3 is the third of a four-part series on the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. Chrysostom is intent on extolling the virtuous practice of bible reading and study. Therefore, he instantiates the practice of the Ethiopian eunuch reading with "diligence" and "zeal", suggesting that this was a public exhibit of a private custom:

If he showed such diligence on a journey, think how diligent he must have been at home; if while on the road he did not let an opportunity pass without reading, much more must this have been the case when seated in his house; if when he did not fully understand the things he read, he did not cease from reading, much more would he not cease when able to understand.⁴⁸⁸

To reinforce this virtue among his members, Chrysostom uses ethnic reasoning: "Remember the eunuch of the queen of Ethiopia. Being a man of a barbarous nation, occupied with numerous cares, and surrounded on all sides by manifold business, he was unable to understand that which he read". Similar to the ethnic reasoning of Chrysostom's earlier citations, the Ethiopian eunuch is located as one beyond the reaches of Graeco-Roman civilisation – a barbarous nation. This makes the point that despite the barriers of language and cultural tradition, the Ethiopian eunuch was not remiss in applying himself to reading scripture. As a

⁴⁸⁸ John Chrysostom, *Four Discourses of Chrysostom: Chiefly on the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus*, trans. by F. Allen (London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1869), Sermon III, §2-3, 62-8.

result, “God knew his willingness, He acknowledged his zeal, and forthwith sent him a teacher”.⁴⁸⁹

2.3.2.4 Jerome

While Jerome, a later Latin Church Father (347-420), born in Stridon, at the border of Dalmatia and Pannonia, does not explicitly mention the ethnoreligious identity of the eunuch in his first letter, there is a leaning to the ‘Gentileness’ of the Ethiopian eunuch in the second.

2.3.2.4.1 *Letter 53.5 to Paulinus (NPNF2 6.98)*

The citation is found in the famous *Letter 53.5*. Known more for its utility in early attestations of the Pauline corpus within the NT and in hermeneutics, *Letter 53* was written to Bishop Paulinus of Nola (between 410-420) to encourage him to study the Scriptures diligently as great persons from “the wisest of the pagans”⁴⁹⁰ to “the apostle Paul”⁴⁹¹ have done. After rehearsing how ancients such as Pythagoras, Plato and Apollonius had assiduously studied theirs and other civilisations,⁴⁹² he commends Paul as the epitome of such industry⁴⁹³ and later, and perhaps to a lesser extent, Peter and John.⁴⁹⁴ It is in this light that the Ethiopian “holy” eunuch is paraded as a diligent searcher of the Scriptures:

This eunuch, who came from Ethiopia, that is from the ends of the world, to the Temple leaving behind him a queen’s palace, ... was so great a lover of the Law and of divine knowledge that he read the holy scriptures even in his chariot.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁸⁹ See *Concionis VII, de Lazaro* 3.2-3 (PG 48:993-996). Cf. PG 62:485.

⁴⁹⁰ *Letters to Paulinus*, (preface) 53.1 (*NPNF2* 6.98).

⁴⁹¹ *Letters to Paulinus*, (preface) 53.1

⁴⁹² *Letters*. 53.1 (*NPNF2* 6:98).

⁴⁹³ *Letters* 53.2-3 (*NPNF2* 6:98).

⁴⁹⁴ *Letters* 53.4 (*NPNF2* 6:98).

⁴⁹⁵ *Letters* 53.5 (*NPNF2* 6:98). Cf. reading of *Letter* 69.6, “By the reading of the prophet the eunuch of

The phrase, “lover of the law”, bears mild allusion to one who is already conversant with the Law. This Jerome lauds.⁴⁹⁶ Whether such a person is perceived by Jerome as a fully-fledged Jew, proselyte or Godfearer, however, is not altogether certain. There are no references to the word ‘Godfearer’ in Jerome’s writings. The only reference to ‘proselyte’ made by Jerome is in the same letter.⁴⁹⁷ Even then, he is not singling any one person out, but referring to a group of people. This leaves the matter of how Jerome saw the ethnoreligious identity of the eunuch quite open. Nevertheless, the Ethiopian eunuch is rewarded: “He was no longer a pupil but a master; and he found more in the church’s font there in the wilderness than he had ever done in the gilded temple of the synagogue”. Incidentally, despite Jerome’s slighting of the synagogue – “the gilded temple of the synagogue” – the eunuch is seen as a synagogue goer. Moreover, Jerome does not question his eligibility to attend the synagogue, which, though not the temple to which the castrated were forbidden, was a gathering place for the Jews.

2.3.2.4.2 Letter 108.11 to Eustochium (NPNF2 6.200)

The second ethnoreligious reference to the Ethiopian eunuch in Jerome’s writings is his letter to Eustochium, the daughter of Paula, his faithful unofficial assistant and confidanté. Paula had just died, and Jerome wishes to console her daughter by affirming Paula’s extraordinary pious life. The letter was written c. 414.⁴⁹⁸ It is written in the form of a spiritualised pilgrimage, where scriptural narratives and

Candace the queen of Ethiopia is made ready for the baptism of Christ. Though it is against nature the Ethiopian does change his skin and the leopard his spots”.

⁴⁹⁶ Significantly, Augustine criticised Jerome for his reliance on the Hebrew bible when producing the Latin translation. He preferred Jerome to use the Greek text, “whose authority is worthy of highest esteem”. In other words, Hebrew, because of its association with the Jews was not to be trusted. See *Letters to Jerome* 28.2 in NPNF1 2.251.

⁴⁹⁷ *Letters* 53.8 (NPNF2 6:99).

⁴⁹⁸ Dale T. Irvin and Scott Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement: Volume 1: Earliest Christianity to 1453* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), 229.

allusions are used to advance the biography of Paula. It is in this way that the Ethiopian eunuch is invoked:

Then immediately quickening her pace she began to move along the old road which leads to Gaza, that is to the ‘power’ or ‘wealth’ of God, silently meditating on that type of the Gentiles, the Ethiopian eunuch, who in spite of the prophet changed his skin and whilst he read the old testament found the fountain of the gospel.⁴⁹⁹

In this scriptural allusion, the Ethiopian eunuch is aligned with power and wealth, presumably given his political status as a high official in the royal courts of the Ethiopian kingdom. Yet, he is identified as a type of Gentile. Significantly, Jerome perceives of the Ethiopian eunuch as a Gentile. In which case, his Gentile ethnoreligious identity is not seen as contrary to his barbarous origins, as mentioned in the letter to the Paulinus. Being a Gentile is not incommensurable with being a barbarian. Then ‘barbarian’ and ‘Gentile’ are terms for being Other.

Nevertheless, the text goes further in othering the Ethiopian eunuch. He is posited as having changed the colour of his skin – perhaps an allusion and therefore a challenge to Jeremiah 13:23 – due to being baptised in the “fountain of the gospel” of Jesus Christ. Manifestly, there is a discursive double entendre. The black skin is used as a metaphorical site for spiritual change. The spiritualising gaze of Jerome is discursively punctuated in terms of the black and (by implication) white binary, which in turn plays out in a way that is anticipative of Bhabha’s epidermalisation, where the black skin is essentialised as a typology for sin. Yet, the spiritualising gaze does not fix the identity of the Ethiopian eunuch. His skin, like his spiritual condition, can change at the font of the gospel. This spiritualising discourse, which is articulated in terms of the

⁴⁹⁹ Letter 108.11 to *Eustochium* (NPNF2 6:200).

biological schema of black and white skin, is anticipative of a much later whiteness. It is a proleptic whiteness in the sense that it foreshadows an ethnic cleansing, where his type of Gentileness deposited on black skin is in desperate need of becoming white skin upon spiritual transformation.

This second reference of Jerome renders his ethnoreligious gaze of the Ethiopian eunuch as being a Gentile but one that requires whitening. It is consistent with his homily on Psalm 86, where he broadens the pool of Ethiopians to non-Jews, maintaining the symbolism of blackness as sin:

At one time we were Ethiopians in our vices and sins. How so? Because our sins had blackened us. But afterwards we heard the words: “Wash yourselves clean!” And we said: “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. We are Ethiopians, therefore, who have been transformed from blackness [*niger*] into whiteness [*candor*].”⁵⁰⁰

Byron convincingly demonstrates the power of colour symbolism as a portrayal of Jerome’s spiritualisation of the conversion process. However, she also connects his spiritual assertions to political realities: ‘Jerome appealed to Ethiopians and the color [sic.] black to encourage his audience not only in devotion to the church, but also in devotion to the empire.’ In which case, the empire as an ideal political type is not far from the ideal religious type. His template for ethnoreligious purity is a Graeco-Gentile one.

The undercurrents of the *Adversus Judaeos* trope enable us to construe Jerome’s ethnoreligious postulations. It enabled Jerome to claim the Ethiopian eunuch as a (Graeco-)Gentile even though this type of Gentileness was not sufficient or complete.

⁵⁰⁰ *Homily* 18 on Psalm 86, 140–41.

2.3.2.5 Augustine

Augustine (354 – 430), the premier Latin African Church Father, does not refer to the ethnoreligious identity of the Ethiopian eunuch. He rather tends to be preoccupied with the Ethiopian eunuch's story for its merit in the defence of baptism as an essential Christian initiation rite.⁵⁰¹ What is notable about his citation of the Ethiopian eunuch in his *Sermon* 49.11,⁵⁰² however, is more his omission of any ethnoreligious marker vis-à-vis that of his explicit labelling of the centurion, Cornelius, in the subsequent paragraph (*Sermon* 49.12), as a Gentile.⁵⁰³

2.3.2.5.1 *Sermon* 49.11

Augustine, in his sermon against the Donatists, a heretical movement that had gained ground in North Africa, is keen to demonstrate that sinners, despite their past, once forgiven are remitted completely of their sins and those forgiven might indeed be used by God. Yet it is not they who are enforcing the grace act, it is God. After drawing upon the story of the forgiveness of the prostitute who anointed Jesus' feet (Luke 7:37), he makes the point, "For there is no sin which one man commits, which another man may not commit also."⁵⁰⁴ He then goes on to make the point that it is Christ that does the forgiving not humans.⁵⁰⁵ Even when humans are used as instruments by God (Matthew 18:18 & John 20:22), it is God through his Spirit who executes the action.⁵⁰⁶ This, he argues, is what

⁵⁰¹ See *On Christian Instruction* (FC 2:3–5); *On Faith and Works* 9:14 (FC 37:235–7)

⁵⁰² *Sermon* 49.11, 12 (*NPNF1* 6:419). There is another reference in the Preface of *On Christian Doctrine*. It is arguable that here Augustine was aware of Jerome's instantiation of the Ethiopian eunuch. See Mark Vessey, 'Augustine among the Writers of the Church', in *A Companion to Augustine*, ed. by Mark Vessey (Malden, MA; Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 250.

⁵⁰³ *Sermon* 49.12 (*NPNF1* 6:420).

⁵⁰⁴ *Sermon* 49.6 (*NPNF1* 6:418).

⁵⁰⁵ *Sermon* 49.7, 8 (*NPNF1* 6:418–419).

⁵⁰⁶ *Sermon* 49.9 (*NPNF1* 6:419).

Simon Magus could not get (Acts 8:19-21).⁵⁰⁷ Simon was attracted to the material display of Philip's agency and thought it commodifiable, not realising that the actual power was not original to Philip, and thereby humankind, but to and from God.

The eunuch's conversion is a contrast. Once baptised, his receipt of the Holy Spirit was not by the instrumentality of the apostles (Peter and John) as with the Samaritans' story (Acts 8:14-17), but directly by God himself (8:39).⁵⁰⁸ Note that Augustine's deduction here could only have come from the longer MSS reading of the Western recension MSS of 8:39, whether via the Old Latin texts, which he was famous for using, or a Greek recension from the Western tradition. His interpretation is not accounted for in the shorter Byzantine reading. Whether David Schaff, the editor of NPNF1 volume, is aware of this or not is not altogether clear, for in the margin he raises a note seeking to correct Augustine's claim – that the Holy Spirit fell upon the eunuch – to agree with the shorter, majority MSS reading of the text, which cites the Holy Spirit sweeping Philip away from the scene.⁵⁰⁹ Augustine's commentary, however, reflects his use of the longer Western recension MSS of Acts as opposed to the more popular shorter recension. Therefore, the longer reading is efficacious for Augustine's interpretation in his sermon.⁵¹⁰ This is, that the Ethiopian eunuch received the Holy Spirit independent of Philip (and thereby humankind), indicating that for Luke God can directly use repentant sinners, and such an anointing is affirming

⁵⁰⁷ *Sermon* 49.10 (*NPNF1* 6:419).

⁵⁰⁸ *Sermon* 49.11 (*NPNF1* 6:419).

⁵⁰⁹ *Sermon* 49.11 (*NPNF1* 6:419), note 3240: "St. Augustin probably conceives of the presence of the Holy Ghost, which "caught away Philip," as sanctifying the Eunich [sic]. "He went on his way rejoicing," his baptism being perfected. St Augustine is followed by the Gloss Ord."

⁵¹⁰ W. A. Strange argues meticulously for the longer reading. This is in spite of a huge problem with its textual originality. See Strange, *The Problem of the Text of Acts*, 65–77. I will take up this argument in chapter 3.

of and efficacious for mission. This is looked at in more detail in the next chapter.

Following his commentary on the Ethiopian eunuch, Augustine now turns to the next case in point for his sermon, the conversion of the centurion, Cornelius (Acts 10). Here, however, he points out the centurion's ethnoreligious identity: he is an uncircumcised Gentile. Whether he points this out in total contrast to the preceding example of the Eunuch where no ethnoreligious marker is used is not entirely clear. One would think not, especially given his view elsewhere that Ethiopians were essentially Gentiles.⁵¹¹ Nevertheless, the rhetorical function of identifying the centurion as a Gentile seems to have a signal force that is contradistinctive to the non-mentioning, intentional or not, of the Ethiopian eunuch's ethnoreligious identity. Could the latter be due to Augustine's ambivalence about the Ethiopian eunuch's identity,⁵¹² or be a rhetorical strategy to privilege the Gentile identity of the centurion? With respect to the latter,

⁵¹¹ Exposition on the Psalms 74.13 in (NPNF1 8:346-347).

⁵¹² Augustine's ambivalence about the Ethiopian eunuch's identity might be symptomatic of his regard for Jews. It is arguable that Augustine at times, especially in his *Confessions*, attempted to hold back the winds of strife against the Jews, which the *Adversus Iudaeos* tradition was proving to be, by defending the source of Jewish faith and practice, the Hebrew bible, as being a dynamic constitutive of the New Testament – hence, the Christian God is the same as the Jewish God. See Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010). Fredriksen's monograph is dedicated to making this point and goes against the grain of popular academic opinion that Augustine followed the *Adversus Iudaeos* trend. For example, commenting on Augustine's putative *Tendenz* against the Jews, Sr. Marie Liguori wrote in the Introduction to her translation of Augustine's *In Answer to the Jews* (otherwise misleadingly entitled, *Adversus Iudaeos*), "His commentaries on them [Jews] throughout his writings – on their blindness, their rejection of Christ and consequent reprobation, the loss of their heritage to the Christians – is in accordance with the traditional attitude of earlier Christian writers", Saint Augustine, 'In Answer to the Jews', in *Treatises on Marriage and Other Subjects*, trans. by Sr. Marie Liguori, The Fathers of the Church (Washington, DC: CUA Press, 2010), 27:388. On the contrary, this tractate bears no anti-Jewish sentiment at all. On the other hand, there is evidence that in dealing with Paul's comments on Esau (Rom. 9:13) and Hagar (Gal. 4:24-25), Augustine employed the principle of *servitus Iudaeorum* – the Justinian (sixth century) idea later codified as a medieval Christian doctrine of Jewish enslavement where Jews historically were considered to be spiritually inferior to Christians and cursed because of Jesus's crucifixion – by way of figural interpretation. His figural interpretation of Paul's depiction of Esau and Hagar is extended to Cain and Ham, rendering Jews inferior (*In genesin*, 8.6). For an excellent development of this position, see Lindsay Kaplan, *Figuring Racism in Medieval Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

identifying the Ethiopian eunuch as a Gentile would have certainly mitigated the force of the Centurion being *the* (first) Gentile convert for Augustine.

2.4 *The Ethiopian Eunuch Post-Church Fathers*

Just a short note on the regard for the Ethiopian eunuch by the post-Church Fathers. Although an examination of the material written during Early Medieval period and the Middle Ages is outside the purview of this dissertation, it is important to note that much of their conclusions are unsurprisingly based upon a similar ethnic reasoning as that of the later Church Fathers, upholding Graeco-Roman civilisation as the benchmark, ideal type. Burke is correct in noting that after the era of the Church Fathers the ethnoreligious identity of the Ethiopian eunuch generally continued as a Gentile with a few slight modifications to this theme.⁵¹³ These could be categorised into three groups: cautiously a Jew, a proselyte, and a Gentile.⁵¹⁴ If the subscriptions to the ethnoreligious identity are similar to that of the Patristic period, then it could explain why the long trajectorial arc of the Ethiopian eunuch's ethnoreligious projections bent towards that of a (Graeco-)Gentile identity.

⁵¹³ Sean D. Burke, *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch: Strategies of Ambiguity in Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 2-5.

⁵¹⁴ For a Gentile ethnoreligious identity, see the English Benedictine monk, Saint Bede, *The Venerable Bede's Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, ed. by Lawrence T. Martin (Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications, 1989) who lived c. 672–735; the English Benedictine monk, Callistus Nicephorus, *Ecclesiastical History*, PG 145:2.6, who lived c. 1256–1335; Nicholas of Lyra (c. 1270–1349), *Postilla Super Totam Bibliam* (Frankfurt: Minerva, 1971), 4, Acts 8:37; Martin Luther (1483–1546), *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 1902, 23:607. For a proselyte, see John Calvin (1509–1564), *The Acts of the Apostles: 1-13*, trans. by John William Fraser and W. J. G. McDonald, vol. 1 (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965); Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), “Ad Acta Apostolorum,” in *Opera Omnia Theologica*, vol. 2 (Basil: E. & J. R. Thurnisios, 1732), Acts 8:27; Lancelot Andrewes (1555–1426), *The Works of Lancelot Andrewes* (Wisconsin: AMS Press, 1967), xi, 3:323–24; Mathew Henry (1662–1714), *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Volume VI-I, Acts – Romans* (Woodstock, ON: Devoted Publishing), 6:103; John Wesley (1703–1791), *Wesley's Notes on the Bible: The New Testament* (Woodstock, ON: Devoted Publishing, 2017), 147. For an inconclusive Jewish identity, see John Lightfoot (1602–1675), John Lightfoot, *The Whole Works of the Late Rev. John Lightfoot, D.D.*, ed. by John Rogers Pitman, 13 vols (London: G. Cowie and Company, 1825), 3:195.

However, this would never be far from race thinking. For example, race thinking, or more specifically ‘race-making’, has been explored by Geraldine Heng, as a means of recognising and reifying race in human differentiation during the Middle Ages, especially with respect to Jews, though Muslims formed part of the discourse.⁵¹⁵ Yet ironically, within these communities there were contemporaneously negative attitudes towards ‘black’ people and the corresponding notion of blackness.⁵¹⁶

2.5 Summary

There is certainly a time-line progression on the way the eunuch’s ethnoreligious identity is developed among the Church Fathers. We saw how with Irenaeus, the eunuch’s ethnoreligious identity as a Jew was palpably nigh present in that it was all but stated. His Jewishness was assumed. Pontius in his depiction of Cyprian goes a step further and is explicit about the ethnoreligious identity of the eunuch being Jewish in spite of attempts of later editorial ‘whitewashing’ obfuscation. Despite some ambiguity in Jerome and to a greater extent Augustine, the other near contemporary Church Fathers maintained through ethnic reasoning that the eunuch was a Gentile; Eusebius, the first among them, stating that he was the first Gentile to be converted. This was the decisive shift.

Yet, running parallel to the movement from Jewishness to Gentileness – and in some ways endogenous to the shift – is the ascendancy in the way the eunuch is romanticised. It is a romanticism that led to exoticism – a proto-orientalised,

⁵¹⁵ Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages*, 3–55. Heng orientates her analysis of racialisation around the social, religious and political conjunctures that led to a series of expulsion of Jews across Europe during the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. This, she argues, was before a recognisable vocabulary of race was formed.

⁵¹⁶ Abraham Melamed, *The Image of the Black in Jewish Culture: A History of the Other* (London; New York: Routledge, 2010).

heightened gaze. Through ethnic (and at times sexual) reasoning he descends from being a noble Jew and lover of the Scriptures to being a pagan or hapless Gentile dependent on the grace of an apostle, Philip. In this way, and likely at the behest of the *Adversus Judaeos* tradition, the politics of his identity shift is unveiled. The *Adversus Judaeos* discourse functioned in terms of what Foucault calls a “*régime* of power”, teleologically organising biblical interpretation to achieve a particular religious and political ideal type.⁵¹⁷

The (Graeco-)Gentile ideal type fully emerged as the new benchmark, anticipative of the much later principle and floating signifier of whiteness. The *Adversus Judaeos* power politics, where a shift towards anti-Judaism (and later antisemitism)⁵¹⁸ burgeoned, cannot be lost on the ethnoreligious transition of the Ethiopian eunuch from being a Jew to a Gentile. It regulated his subjectivity and created a new subject. And this transpired commensurable to and in tandem with the parting of the ways between Christianity and Judaism, where Christianity was keen to sever all relationships with its parent religion, Judaism, in an effort of self-determination. It is in this political context that the Ethiopian eunuch was instrumentalised by Church Fathers, like Augustine, in the church’s dispute over baptism ritual, where his agency was reduced to a pragmatic role and function (of baptism), valuable merely for Christian dogmatics. In other words, he was commodified for dogmatic consumption.⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁷ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 112.

⁵¹⁸ Dunn is right when he opines, “Thus within the first 150 years of Christian history was established the line of Christian self-definition in relation to Israel (that Christians have replaced Jews as the real people of God) and the fateful *Adversus Judaeos* tradition, a tradition of self-definition which has remained influential to the present day.” James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity*. 2nd ed. (London: SCM, 2006), 342.

⁵¹⁹ R. S. Sugirtharajah seeks to make the point about commoditization: “When liberation texts are wrested from their native contexts and introduced into the comfort of a First World environment, they become commodities”. See R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations: An Alternative Way of Reading the Bible and Doing Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2011), 166. The “liberation texts” in our case would be the

The Ethiopian eunuch became a property of Church Fathers and of the Church, haunted by the shifting spectre of proto-whiteness. Constantinian imperialism provided the buttress for their claim of Graeco-Gentile roots and heritage, which they privileged above all other groups including and especially Jews. Thus, the Graeco-Gentile Christian identity became a conceptual tool for purifying and thereby civilising the Ethiopian eunuch, for through ethnic reasoning he is transformed from being black to being white. This authenticity of the new Graeco-Gentile Christian in contradistinction to a failed and corrupt Judaism is the new standard. Only then would purity and originarity serve discursively as tropes for the way whiteness was later to be framed in Christian discourses about the Ethiopian eunuch.

His body incited a reflexive, racialised calculus among his later readership, but this did not deter their ownership of him as the first Graeco-Gentile Christian. In one sense, he becomes black. But he becomes ‘black’ in order to become ‘white’ – a glowingly white Graeco-Gentile. Indeed, ideological and political interests, then as now, shaped (even inflamed) attitudes, beliefs and values. Whiteness as an analytical tool – even as an incipient proto-whiteness – enables us to deconstruct this process, for whiteness is the heir to the Graeco-Gentile ideal type.

conversion story of the Ethiopian eunuch; the “native context”, the Jewish context; and “the comfort of a First World environment”, the constrictive, normative, ideological gaze of the Church Fathers.

PART TWO

Chapter 3

3 CONVIVIALISING ACTS, ITS AUTHOR AND JEWISH IDENTITY

*But ideas and mental constructs, too, flowed across political boundaries in that world, and – even if they found specific local expression – enable us to see that what we are dealing with are not separate and comparable, but connected histories.*⁵²⁰

– Sanjay Subrahmanyam

3.1 Introduction

Given that biblical studies is predicated on the formational foundation of Euromodernity, this chapter begins the shift to the reconstruction of the Ethiopian eunuch in order to further destabilise the question, ‘why cannot the Ethiopian eunuch be a Jew?’ As such, it focuses on setting the stage for chapter 4 by theoretically applying the hermeneutic of ‘critical conviviality’ as a means to conceptualising Luke as a postcolonial, cosmopolitan theologian who had a broad perspective of what the diasporic, ethnoreligious landscape of first century Judaism was in his purpose for writing Acts. This is significant for appreciating his vested ethnoreligious interests – assumptions and presuppositions – in the Ethiopian eunuch. It will then become clear that notions of ethnicity as refracted through terms like *Ἰουδαῖοι* (and its cognates), *ὁ λαός*, *τὸ ἔθνος* (*τὰ ἔθνη*) and *γένος* are not biologically inscribed, but are floating, composite signifiers that are

⁵²⁰ Subrahmanyam, ‘Connected Histories’, 748.

contingent on land, religious life, relationships and collective peoples, and help to explain how we might, like Luke have done, approach this African literary figure.

By way of proceeding, we will first look at positioning Luke as a diasporic Jew, with cosmopolitan and postcolonial sensibilities, which predisposes him favourably to the personhood of the Ethiopian eunuch. Secondly, brief observations on the book of Acts – its provenance, texts and character – will be noted since it frames our reading of Acts 8:26–40. Thirdly, the strategic position of the Ethiopian eunuch story in the decisive ‘turn’ in Acts’s chronological, missional movement from Jews to Gentiles will be put forward. Fourthly, and lastly, given that the notion of Jewishness is central to the research question, a look at Jewishness in the first century through the postcolonial prism of an ethnoreligious, political discourse will be mounted.

Eventually, a legitimate context – literary, theologically, historically and socio-culturally – will be reclaimed through the cultural (postcolonial) literary lens of ‘critical conviviality’ as constituted by ‘collectivist hospitality’, ‘connected histories’, ‘as if’ and ‘the carnivalesque’. These will conspire to ‘snatch from the hidden histories’, in the Hallian sense of the word, an Afroasiatic vital space. Yet it will equally ‘snatch’ from the academy of whiteness a position for the Jewish conceptualisation of the Ethiopian eunuch. As a result, it will set the stage for the next and final chapter on the conceptual tropes of pilgrimage and representation.

3.2 Luke: A Hellenised Diasporic Jew

There is a disclaimer: scholarship is vast.⁵²¹ Therefore, we will be looking at the material as it pertains to the interests of conceptualising the identity and agency

⁵²¹ In 2004, Todd Penner produced a prodigious survey of Acts scholarship. Even back then it was deemed to be insurmountably voluminous. See Todd Penner, ‘Madness in the Method? The Acts of the Apostles in

of the Ethiopian eunuch. In which case, in this section we will consider Luke as a diasporic author as a prelude to him as a postcolonial-cosmopolitan theologian; then finally, Luke's diverse diasporic audience.

3.2.1.1 Luke as Diasporic Author

Could someone like Luke⁵²² have had a positive disposition towards someone like the African eunuch?⁵²³ If so, how so? This section challenges us to view Luke

Current Study', *Currents in Research*, 2.2 (2004): 223–293.

⁵²² Since the name of the author of Acts has negligible bearing on the meaning of and political implications for Acts 8:26–40 it is safe to maintain the arbitrarily designate Luke as the author. In any case, Bauckham makes the point that it is likely that since Theophilus, the addressee of the Luke-Acts, would have known the author, the author could not have been anonymous. See Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 301. Lukan authorship of Acts (as well as the Gospel of Luke) is claimed from as early as the second century. Irenaeus, *AH* 3.1.1; 3.14.2–4 set the pattern for the early church – see C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Acts of the Apostles*, ed. by J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield, and G. N. Stanton, ICC, 1, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 1:30–48. Other second century citations include the Muratorian Canon 34–35 and the Anti-Marcionite Prologue to the Gospel of Luke. Like Irenaeus they attribute Luke with the physician by the same name in Col. 4:14 – cf. F. Scott Spencer, 'Acts and Modern Literary Approaches', in *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, ed. by David W. J. Gill and Conrad H. Gempf, *BAFCS*, 5 vols (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 2:407. The third century \mathfrak{P}^{75} (c. 200), the earliest extant manuscript of Luke, signs off with the inscription, $\text{Εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ Λουκᾶν}$ (Gospel according to Luke). Recent scholarship supports the Lukan authorship citing the "we" passages (Acts 16:10–17; 20:5; 21:18; 27:1–28:16) as evidence: F. F. Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1952), 41; James D. G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem*, vol. 2, *Christianity in the Making* (Cambridge; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 66; Martin Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003), 66; Witherington, *Acts*, 53–4; But this position is thoroughly critiqued. See Stanley E. Porter, 'The "We" Passages', in *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, ed. David W. J. Gill and Conrad H. Gempf, vol. 2, 5 vols, *BAFCS* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 548–58; Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, ed. Conrad H. Gempf, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), XLIX, 308–64.

⁵²³ A Lukan authorship is supported by the general consensus on the unity of the volumes of his Gospel and Acts. John C. Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae: Contributions to the Study of the Synoptic Problem*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), 174; Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, trans. by Bertram Lee Woolf (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1971; reprint, 1982), 3; originally published as *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1919); Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Luke*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1922), xi–xii. Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles*, 1–9; Heinrich Greeven, 'Style Criticism in the Book of Acts', in *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Heinrich Greeven, trans. Mary Ling (London: SCM, 1956), 1–25; Henry J. Cadbury, *Making of Luke-Acts*, 2nd ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1958), 1–11; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX*, 35–41; Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 90–112; Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Eldon Jay Epp and Christopher R. Matthews, trans. James Limburg, A. Thomas Kraabel, and Donald H. Juel, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 2; David Edward Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1988), 77; Gerhard Schneider, *Lukas 1–10. Das Evangelium nach Lukas, Kapitel 1–10*, Ökumenischer TB- Kommentar zum NT, 3 vols (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1992), 32–3; I. Howard Marshall, 'Acts and the "Former Treatise"', in *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, ed. David W. J. Gill and Conrad H. Gempf, vol. 2, *BAFCS* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 172; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation*

differently. A characterisation of Luke as author with the help of some ethnographic-historiographical insight of his social location – i.e., cultural lens – might help with positioning some perspectives on the theoretical conceptions of the plausibility of the Ethiopian eunuch being imaged as a Jew. Again, a historical reconstruction of culture is efficacious for understanding racial-political predispositions.

It is likely that he⁵²⁴ is a Hellenised diasporic Jew of the Way,⁵²⁵ probably from Antioch of the coastal region of Syria.⁵²⁶ According to the so called “Anti-

with *Introduction and Commentary*, AB, 31 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 49–51; W. C. van Unnik, ‘The “Book of Acts” – The Confirmation of the Gospel’, in *The Composition of Luke’s Gospel: Selected Studies from “Novum Testamentum”*, ed. David E. Orton (Leiden; Boston; Köln: Brill, 1999), 184–86; Joel B. Green, ‘Luke-Acts or Luke and Acts? A Reaffirmation of Unity’, in *Reading Acts Today*, ed. Steve Walton et al. (London; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2011), 108; Mikeal C. Parsons and Richard I. Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 8, 38–40, 53. For an alternative position, see Patricia Walters, *The Assumed Authorial Unity of Luke and Acts: A Reassessment of the Evidence*, SNTSMS 145 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁵²⁴ The author of Acts is most likely male. See the self-referencing of the dative, masculine singular of the perfect participle, *παρηκολουθήκοτι* in his preface of Luke 1:3.

⁵²⁵ Alexander, *Acts in Its Ancient Literary Context*, 245–46; Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Acts*, Social Science Commentary (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008), 7. For a Jew or Godfearer, see J. Jervell, *Theology of Acts of the Apostles*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 5–6; Gregory E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephos, Luke-Acts, and Apologetic Historiography*, NovTSup 64 (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2005), 328; Rick Strelan, *Luke the Priest: The Authority of the Author of the Third Gospel* (Aldershot, Hampshire, UK; Burlington, VT, USA: Ashgate Publishing., 2008), 103.

Some scholars suggest that Luke was a (Graeco-)Gentile ‘Christian’ of Godfearer stock: François Bovon, *Luke the Theologian: Fifty-Five Years of Research (1950-2005)*, 2nd rev. ed. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005), 490; Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008), 7; Witherington, *Acts*, 58; Robert H. Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament*, 5th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 208. Cf. Adolf von Harnack, *Luke the Physician: The Author of the Third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1907; reprint, 2009); Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: Introduction and 1:1-247* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 1:402–406. This is generally based on the distinction of Col. 4:10–11, where ‘Paul’ posits Aristarchus, Mark (cousin of Barnabas) and Justus as being the only ones of the circumcision party (οἱ ὄντες ἐκ περιτομῆς) who alone (οὗτοι μόνοι) were his co-workers, from 4:12–14, where the rest are of Paul’s putatively ‘Gentile’ co-workers: Epaphras, Luke, and Demas. However, Ellis argues quite persuasively that οἱ ὄντες ἐκ περιτομῆς should be aligned with the Hebrew Jews of Acts 6:1; 10:45 and 11:2 (οἱ Ἑβραῖοι). See ‘The Circumcision Party and the Early Christian Mission’, in E. Earl Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity: New Testament Essays* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003), 116–128. In which case, Luke *et. al.* might indeed be aligned with the Hellenist Jews (οἱ Ἑλληνιστᾶι) as mediated by Acts 11:20. Ellis views Col. 4:11–14 as evidence of a collaborative mission led by Paul in the guise of “ecumenical Christianity” (p. 124).

⁵²⁶ The Western Text of Acts 11:28 quotes Luke as saying, “When we came together,” (Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis [D]), suggesting that Luke was in Antioch *circa* 42. Eusebius in *Hist. eccl.* 3.4.1, and Jerome, *Vir. Ill.* 7 support this assertion. In which case, Antioch, a major Roman provincial city, would have afforded

Marcionite Prologues”⁵²⁷ and Jerome (*Adv. Haer.* 3.1.1; 3.14.1),⁵²⁸ he is possibly writing from either Rome (cf. Eusebius’s *Eccl. Hist.* 2.22.6) or Achaia. If Rome, then for him it is possibly the triumphant outer reaches of the Graeco-Gentile mission in Acts, “the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8; 13:47).⁵²⁹ If Achaia, then it could signify the virgin outer reaches of the Graeco-Gentile mission to which his mentor, Paul, is missionary – again, “the end of the earth”.⁵³⁰ Either way, he is

Luke a cultural context conducive to an education, language and style that is reflected in Acts. See Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 24. From a structural functionalism perspective the topography of Acts reflects intimate knowledge of the Mediterranean basin and is very acquainted with the subculture of Judaism in that area. Cf. Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society: 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 3.

⁵²⁷ *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum.*, ed. by Kurt Aland, 15th Rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2005), 562–3.

⁵²⁸ See the Preface of the late fourth century (398) composition, Saint Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew* (*Volume 117*), trans. by Thomas P. Scheck, The Fathers of the Church (Washington, DC: CUA Press, 2008), 118:53.

⁵²⁹ The phrase, ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς in Acts 1:8, is variously interpreted to mean: one, Rome, from a Jerusalem-centred perspective – Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 7; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, AB 31, 206–7; C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Acts of the Apostles*, ed. by J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield, and G. N. Stanton, ICC, 2 vols (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 1:80; see also Pss. Sol. 8.15, where Rome comes from the ‘end of the earth’ (ἀπ’ ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς), to conquer Jerusalem; two, Spain – E. Earle Ellis, “‘The End of the Earth’ (Acts 1:8),” 1 (1991): 123–132’, *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 1 (1991), 123–32; three, Ethiopia – Thomas S. Moore, “‘To the End of the Earth’- The Geographical and Ethnic Universalism of Acts 1:8 in Light of Isaianic Influence on Luke”, *JETS* 40.3 (1997), 389–99; and four, Israel, where γῆ is a reference to Israel – Daniel R. Schwartz, “The End of the ΓΗ (Acts 1:8): Beginning or End of the Christian Vision?”, *JBL* 105.4 (1986), 669–76. Note, however, that the singular “end of the earth” is perhaps contradistinctive to “ends of the earth”. The latter tends to be the preferred phrase of the ancient Greeks, while the former that of the OT (LXX). See Isaiah 45:22; 48:20; 49:6; and Acts 1:8; 13:47.

⁵³⁰ In effect, Macedonia and Achaia were on the fringes of the Jerusalem-centred and Antioch-centred world despite Jews inhabiting there (Acts 16:13). What makes Macedonia, Achaia, and by implication Ethiopia on the periphery of a Jerusalem-centred world was probably their geography. They might have seemed far-flung places in the imagination of Judaeans and Antiochene minds. In which case, Luke could have conceptualised them as potentially unexplored by the gospel in the similar but graphic way that beyond the Aegean to the unknown East (Syria, Phoenicia, Babylon), and to the South (Egypt, Ethiopia), and to the West (Sicily, Italy) were considered unknown, unexplored territory for Greek novelists. Alexander seems to be right in suggesting that these ‘virgin countries’ are for Paul (and Luke) unexplored territory (Loveday Alexander, “In Journeyings Often”: Voyaging in the Acts of the Apostles and in Greek Romance”, in *Luke’s Literary Achievement: Collected Essays*, ed. by C. M. Tuckett, JSNTSup, 116 (Sheffield: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1995), 35). To press the point further, then, if Ethiopia, Macedonia and Achaia are potentially virgin territories to be taken for Luke’s missiological purposes, then they could easily signify the ‘end of the earth’.

extensively familiar with the Aegean region.⁵³¹ This could account for why he is projected as an ethnographer of sorts.⁵³²

Assuming that Luke is from the influential Antioch of Syria, given that the balance of evidence seems to be more in this favour,⁵³³ it would then be fair to say that he was socialised by a strong multi-ethnic Jewish (11:19) and Godfearer (11:20, if we take the Hellenists in this case to be Godfearers – ‘Ελληνιστάς),⁵³⁴ subcultural⁵³⁵ presence within a dominant Hellenised majority culture⁵³⁶ and religion,⁵³⁷ in which divination was embedded.⁵³⁸ This deduction is based on

⁵³¹ Keener, *Acts*, 1:434–435.

⁵³² Dean Philip Bechard, *Paul Outside the Walls: A Study of Luke's Socio-Geographical Universalism in Acts 14:8–20* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2000), 150–70. The notion of ethnography is meant without the baggage of colonialism.

⁵³³ Strabo suggests that during the reign of Augustus and Tiberius, Antioch was similar in size and power to Alexandria of Egypt and Seleucia of the Tigris. See Strabo 16.2.5.

⁵³⁴ In Acts 11:20e, there is a text-critical choice between ‘Ελληνιστάς (root: ‘Ελληνιστής; B D² E L...) and ‘Ελληνας (root: ‘Ελλην; ℱ⁷⁴ A D* ...). Rather than deal with the variants purely on the basis of textual criticism, by which NA²⁸ and B⁵ agree to be ‘Ελληνιστάς, most scholars rightly deal with the choice according to the context of Acts 11. ‘Ελληνιστής, which is neither found in previous Greek literature nor in Hellenistic-Jewish literature, refers to Hellenists, who are Greek speaking or Greek culturally practicing Jews (cf. 6:1 and 9:29; see also Chrysostom's reference in PG 60:113, for its occurrence, except that its interpretation there likely means ‘pagan’); and ‘Ελλην refers to ethnic Greeks, i.e., Graeco-Gentiles. The question then becomes, how is Luke framing the discourse in 11:19–20? Along language or ethnic lines? Since it is ethnic, in that the dative, ‘Ιουδαίοις (to the Jews), is used in 11:19, then we should opt for the Alexandrian (and ethnic) reading of ‘Ελληνας, against the text-critical judgement of NA²⁸ and B⁵. Nevertheless, whether ‘Ελληνιστάς or ‘Ελληνας, the context suggests Greek acculturated people. And given the likelihood that the sharing of the gospel by the diasporan Cyprian and Cyrene Jews was done in synagogues, the ‘Ελληνας (or ‘Ελληνιστάς) were probably Godfearers.

⁵³⁵ ‘Subculture’ has equivalency with Philip Harland's social-scientific category of ‘cultural minority group’. See Philip A. Harland, *Dynamics of Identity in the World of the Early Christians* (New York; London: T&T Clark, 2009), 11–2. However, ‘subculture’ is the preferred term due to the social dynamic of subversion, which is a function of postcolonial theory. For the guile, resolute slipperiness, sophisticated riposte and resilience of stylisation against that hegemonic control, see ‘Subcultures, Cultures and Class: A Theoretical Overview’, in *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, ed. by Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, 2nd ed. (London; New York: Routledge, 2006 [1976]): 42. Commenting on this notion, James Procter states that “It is through stylisation that things are disarticulated from their dominant meanings and rearticulated in new contexts,” Procter, *Stuart Hall*, 92.

⁵³⁶ Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society: 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 3; Glanville Downey, *Ancient Antioch*, Princeton Legacy Library (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015 [1962]), 3–4.

⁵³⁷ Clark Hopkins, *The Discovery of Dura-Europos*, ed. by Bernard Goldman (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 20–2.

⁵³⁸ Cornelius Tacitus, *The Annals*, trans. by A. J. Woodman (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2004),

extensive research done on this urban city of Syria, also known as Antioch-on-the-Orontes, because of the huge river Orontes running through it.⁵³⁹ It was a multicultural and multilinguistic city with its own brand of the Olympics.⁵⁴⁰ It was known for its hospitality and openness (Acts 11:23, 26, 29-30).⁵⁴¹ Jerome Crowe perhaps over-represents and romanticises the virtue and practice of hospitality in his comments on first century Antioch – especially with the onset of ‘Christianity’. However, he is probably correct in his picture of the fluid and reciprocal exchange of hospitality between the different religious groups and peoples,⁵⁴² of which Luke would have been a part.

This multicultural environment for Luke’s Antioch is furthermore supported by the ἐκκλησία leaders instantiated in Acts 13:1, which point to a multicultural community – Barnabas is a Levite from Cyprus (4:36); Simeon Niger is likely Jewish with a Latin surname, which means ‘black’, indicating that he might have been from North Africa; Lucius is also from a North African city, Cyrene; and,

2.69.3.

⁵³⁹ See, for example, Meeks and Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch*. Meeks and Wilken posits the proportion of Jews in Antioch during Augustus’s day to be significantly around 12-13%. Richard Longenecker posits that under Roman rule the proportion was probably as high as 14%. See Richard N. Longenecker, ‘Antioch of Syria’, in *Major Cities of the Biblical World*, ed. by R. K. Harrison (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers, 1985), 15–6.

⁵⁴⁰ Florent Heintz, ‘Catalogue of the Exhibition III: Entertainment’, in *Antioch: The Lost Ancient City*, ed. by Christine Kondoleon (Princeton, NJ; Worcester, MA: Princeton University Press; Worcester Art Museum, 2000), 155. For evidence of multilinguistic multiculturalism and hospitality from inscriptions and grave reliefs, see Anna Gonosvá, ‘Catalogue of the Exhibition I: City and the People’, in *Antioch: The Lost Ancient City*, ed. by Christine Kondoleon (Princeton, NJ; Worcester, MA: Princeton University Press; Worcester Art Museum, 2000), 142.

⁵⁴¹ Even a couple of centuries later, John Chrysostom boasted of Antioch’s reputation of hospitality and charity (*Homily* 66 on Matthew, NPNF1, 10:407. For an analysis of how the fourth century Greek Sophist, Libanius, also extolled this ancient city, see Arthur Darby Nock, ‘The Praises of Antioch’, *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 40.1 (1 December 1954): 76–82.

⁵⁴² Jerome Crowe, *From Jerusalem to Antioch: The Gospel Across Cultures* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997). The following quote sets the tone of his book: “Everybody in Antioch, too, was familiar with the welter of religions that other people practiced. What was unknown to anybody until then was the kind of religion in which non-Jews shared with Jews in a way that seemed to transcend previous differences, where Jews would accept the hospitality of pagans, where pagans and Jews could share in common worship, even in a common meal” (p. xiii).

Manaen is of aristocratic Jewish stock, since he is an acquaintance of Herod Antipas.⁵⁴³ The ἐκκλησία congregation was wealthy enough to patronage a gift offering to relieve the poor in Jerusalem (11:28-30).⁵⁴⁴ Part of this heritage may have stemmed from the fact that some members of the Antiochene congregation⁵⁴⁵ might well have lived in the affluent suburbs outside of the city walls,⁵⁴⁶ urging a strong subcultural and influential presence. What is more, the congregation was a fairly established ‘proto-Christian’ one of The Way before Paul arrived, and later served as a stopping station and sponsor for his missionary trips (13:2; 14:21, 26; 15:30; 18:22). It at least had prophets (11:27; 13:1), deacons (Nicolaus in 6:5); and teachers (13:1).⁵⁴⁷

Moreover, what could also account for Luke’s enculturated conversance of the Ethiopian eunuch is that Antioch as capital of Roman Syria was also a strategic

⁵⁴³ Manaen’s attachment to Antioch, if indeed he were from Antioch, could indicate a useful royal connection. We know, for example, that Herod’s father was previously a major benefactor of Antioch, *Wars* 1.425, tying Jerusalem religio-politically to Antioch.

⁵⁴⁴ Antioch was viewed as among the top three or four richest cities of the Roman Empire. See Meeks and Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch*, 1. Furthermore, Antioch’s patronage of a gift to Jerusalem in Acts 11:28-30 was not the first time. According to Josephus, they sent gifts for the Jerusalem Temple before, *Wars* 7.43-44.

⁵⁴⁵ Josephus is the first to note that the Jews in Antioch were referred to as ‘Antiochenes’ (*Ag. Ap.* 2.39), who enjoyed citizen rights on par with the Greeks after the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes (*Wars* 7.44).

⁵⁴⁶ Bernadette J Brooten, ‘The Jews of Ancient Antioch’, in *Antioch: The Lost Ancient City*, ed. by Christine Kondoleon (Princeton, NJ; Worcester, MA: Princeton University Press; Worcester Art Museum, 2000), 30. Christine Kondoleon refers to archaeological ruins that evidenced that first century Jews living in the suburbs of Antioch lived in a built-up area with stone farm houses, indicating a fairly well-to-do class residing there. See Christine Kondoleon, ‘The City of Antioch: An Introduction’, in *Antioch: The Lost Ancient City*, ed. by Christine Kondoleon (Princeton, NJ; Worcester, MA: Princeton University Press; Worcester Art Museum, 2000), 10.

⁵⁴⁷ Josephus further suggests that Jews settled in Antioch about the time that it was first founded by Seleucus Nicator in 300 BCE (*Ag. Ap.* 2.39; *Ant.* 12.119). He further avers that there were Gentile ‘Judaisers’ in Syria (*Ant.* 2.463), who became recognised as a distinct cultural group (*Wars* 7.44; *Ant.* 12.119). However, as was demonstrated in the previous chapter, there was some antipathy between nascent Christianity and sections of Judaism by the end of the first century, especially if the writings of Ignatius (and later in the fourth century, John Chrysostom) were anything to go by. See Ignatius (*circa* 110): *Magn.* 10.1-3; *Rom.* 3.3; *Phil.* 6.1; *Mart. Pol.* 10.1. M. W. Holmes in “Ignatius of Antioch,” *DLNTD*, 530-533, places the composition of Ignatius’s letters to the period of Trajan’s reign (98-117). Although Larry Helyer, avers perhaps prematurely that Ignatius was a primary determinant for the eventual parting of the ways, he is right to position Ignatius as an early agitator. See Larry R. Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period: A Guide for New Testament Students* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 490.

geopolitical metropolis. It served as a conduit and entrêpot between the Roman west and the Far East, in both politics and trade.⁵⁴⁸ Government officials and rulers commuted through it. Even ambassadors of the Indian (or Dramiran) king of the Pandya kingdom, passed through it.⁵⁴⁹ What is more, its strategic region as a trading route may be gleaned from *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, a mid-first century literary marine handbook, chartering coastal stops of sea lanes and port cities for merchants trading between Roman Egypt, eastern Africa, southern Arabia, India and the Afroasiatic strip,⁵⁵⁰ referring *inter alia* to special textiles, like silk from China, which traded through Antioch.⁵⁵¹ A major corridor began from the Persian Gulf, up the Euphrates, and across from Edessa to the Mediterranean through Antioch.⁵⁵² There were also trade routes linking the shepherds and nomads of Upper Egypt, Nubia and Ethiopia with Arabia, which itself had established trade routes by land and sea to the Mediterranean and across the Afroasiatic strip.⁵⁵³ Defined by a collectivist hospitality, this would have allowed for a convivial context for cross-cultural interaction however uneven that might have been, consolidating commercial and cultural practices across the Afroasiatic region and beyond. Given Luke's learning and professional class, he

⁵⁴⁸ For trading routes connecting Antioch with India and China, see William Vincent, *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, 2 vols (London: Cadell and Davies, 1805), 2:494.

⁵⁴⁹ Strabo 15.1.3, 73. For a description of Pandyan history, see Aylmer Smith, *The Early History of India* (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1962 [1914]), 468–76.

⁵⁵⁰ *The Periplus Maris Erythraei: Text with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, ed. by Lionel Casson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 6–10. It was written by an Egyptian scribe.

⁵⁵¹ Casson, *Periplus*, 17. Though Antioch is inferred, but not specifically mentioned here, Sing Chew substantiates the trade route. See Sing C. Chew, *The Recurring Dark Ages: Ecological Stress, Climate Changes, and System Transformation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman Altamira, 2007), 142.

⁵⁵² Although the *Periplus* does not specifically mention Antioch, in that it focuses on the Red Sea trade routes of the three regions of Africa, South Arabia and India, it refers to a fourth trade route through the Persian Gulf, up the Euphrates, and through to the Mediterranean, which would undoubtedly include Antioch. See Casson, *Periplus*, 33–7. However, Vincent does allude to evidence of Antioch being part of that trade route “on the line of the caravans from the Persian Gulf” of which Ethiopia was a part. See Vincent, *The Periplus*, 2:321.

⁵⁵³ Vincent, *The Periplus*, 2:13. See p. 549 for the close and often misconstrued relationship between Ethiopia and Arabia.

would have been no doubt *au fait* with the broader international affairs of Antioch and its environs and possibly international commuters such as Egyptians, Arabians and Ethiopians. Moreover, the associated trade routes would have facilitated the spread of the Jesus movement across the empire.⁵⁵⁴

Then, how would Luke have regarded the African in diaspora?⁵⁵⁵ Diaspora, for the purposes of this dissertation, is best seen convivially as a paradigmatic trope to frame analytically the experiences of (Afroasiatic) Jews in the diaspora, not by way of homogenising their experiences but to recognise the socio-political contingencies that gave rise to different and sometimes, contradictory lived experiences.⁵⁵⁶ Seeing (Afroasiatic) Jews like Luke as diasporan rather than an essentialised 'Judaean' or 'Antiochene' say, would therefore enable an understanding of their historical and cultural contingencies as affected by the phenomenon of diaspora and diasporisation. As will be exemplified later when discussing 'Ιουδαῖος as a composite, floating signifier, the Afroasiatic Jewish diaspora is best conceptualised as inherently a diverse one.

⁵⁵⁴ Josephus's commented on Jewish life in the aftermath of Antiochus Epiphanes, post-164 BCE (*Wars* 7.44-45): "The Jewish colony grew in numbers, and their richly designed and costly offerings formed a splendid ornament to the temple. Moreover, they were constantly attracting to their religious ceremonies multitudes of Greeks, and these they had in some measure incorporated with themselves" (*Wars* 7:45b). Scholars suggest that the Jewish presence in Antioch was sufficiently appreciable so as to attract Greeks to their fold. See Martinus C. de Boer, 'God-Fearers in Acts', in *Luke's Literary Achievement: Collected Essays*, ed. by C. M. Tuckett, JSNTSup, 116 (Sheffield: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1995), 50–71.

⁵⁵⁵ Historical accounts of the Jewish diaspora in the first century, such as Irina Levinskaya's influential *Diaspora Setting*, deals with diaspora geographically in the mere geographical/scattering sense of the word, limiting their observations to the Mediterranean basin. See Irina Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, BAFCS, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994). This, however, yields neither the geopolitical nor sociocultural dimensions of the phenomenon of diaspora – i.e., the characteristics and implications of living under diasporic conditions.

⁵⁵⁶ Rather than construe diaspora against a particular set of 'scattering' characteristics, it is best to conceptualise it convivially in terms of its dynamic social and political processes. See Kim D. Butler, 'Interrogating Diasporas in Dialogue: The Jewish Diaspora's Relationship to African Diaspora Scholarship', in *The Jewish Diaspora as a Paradigm: Politics, Religion and Belonging*, ed. by Nergis Canefe (Osmanbey, Istanbul: Libra Kitap, 2014), 76.

In light of the foregoing, while diaspora means scattering, it also means fragmentation, exile and loss.⁵⁵⁷ Given that Antioch hosted a sizeable Jewish population, it would be fair to say that as diasporans the Jewish Antiochenes' adherence to their home religious culture would have been variously strong, celebrating to differing degrees some of the old 'home' traditions that spoke of nostalgia and belonging. This, however, would have been nuanced by the attraction to integrate within a compelling Hellenistic society, even though the symbolic cultural sites of the colonial host would have been religiously contested by their Jewish subculture.

Therefore, in light of the Ethiopian eunuch, how should we understand Luke's sociocultural identity? Firstly, Luke's Antiochene Jewishness should not be construed as a mere victim of a Roman global imperialism, as other diasporic Jewish identities might have been. Secondly, to typecast his authorship as such would be to repress his literary agency and effectively play into the hands of identity politics, thereby denying any dialecticism between the vectors of hegemonic forces of say imperial Rome and the subjugated plight of Jewish Antiochenes. Thirdly, victimhood projects simplistic univocal binaries, such as Rome (the West) vs. the colonies (the Rest), without accounting for, for example, the agonistic imbrication of Rome *and* its colonies. To adapt a phrase of C.L.R. James for the purposes of examining the African diaspora of the twentieth century, 'Luke is in the imperial world, but not of it'.⁵⁵⁸ He writes with a 'double consciousness'. Therefore, his use of imperialist's tools, literary or otherwise, should not be indicative of any solidarity with Rome's politics.

⁵⁵⁷ Jennings, *Acts*, 6.

⁵⁵⁸ The actual phrase quoted by C. L. R. James is "are in but not of Europe", cited in Stuart Hall, "In but Not of Europe": Europe and Its Myths', in *Figures D'Europe: Images and Myths of Europe*, ed. Luisa Passerini (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2003), 35.

But what would this subculture mean for Luke as a diasporan author (or for any other subcultural, Afroasiatic Jew, for that matter)? To prod this discourse further, Hall's work in accounting for subcultures might prove instructive. Looking at black youths in UK, he demonstrated how their fluent, shifting and destabilised subjectivities challenged the hegemonic stereotyping of the dominant culture. Then following Althusser's detachment of ideology from Marx's (causal) economic base,⁵⁵⁹ Laclau's and Mouffe's privileging of social movements (such as feminism, anti-colonialism, anti-racism and anti-globalisation),⁵⁶⁰ and Althusser's coupling of identity with ideology and culture (conjunctural),⁵⁶¹ Hall through Gramsci⁵⁶² offered an explanation that the locus of culture is a contested site of hegemony. This is certainly the case with subcultures. Subcultures constantly contest the cultural symbols and practices of the dominant, parent culture.⁵⁶³ This is because subcultures are often cultural enclaves of retreat, providing a safe space to negotiate one's comportment and means of counter-moves with honour.⁵⁶⁴ It is in this process that Luke's Hellenistic Jewish subculture runs

⁵⁵⁹ Hall, for instance, re-examined the Marxist economic ideology through Gramscian and Althusserian lens positioning cultural production at the centre of critiquing the discourse of politics and economics. See Stuart Hall, 'A Sense of Classlessness', 26–32. Cf. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, trans. Geoffrey N. Smith and Quintin Hoare (New York: International Publishers, 1971).

⁵⁶⁰ Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London; New York: Verso, 2000); Chantal Mouffe, 'Deconstruction, Pragmatism and the Politics of Democracy', in *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, eds. Simon Critchley *et al* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996).

⁵⁶¹ For how Hall critically engages Althusser, see Stuart Hall, 'Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-structuralist Debates', *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 2.2 (1 June 1985): 91–114.

⁵⁶² For how Hall is influenced by Gramsci, see Stuart Hall, 'Politics and Ideology: Gramsci', in *On Ideology*, ed. by Stuart Hall, Bob Lumley, and Gregor McLennan (London: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1977), 3:45–78.

⁵⁶³ For work on the subculture of Black youths, see Hall, *Resistance Through Rituals*, and Stuart Hall, *Policing the Crisis*.

⁵⁶⁴ It is possibly in the spirit of retreating for empowerment and regroup that Vincent Wimbush drew on the African slave practice of marronage in Haiti and Jamaica. See Vincent L. Wimbush, 'Contemptus Mundi Means "...Bound for the Promised Land...": Religion from the Site of Cultural Marronage', in *The Papers of the Henry Luce III Fellows in Theology*, ed. by Jonathan Strom, Series in Theological Scholarship and Research (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997), 2:131–61; and Wimbush, 'Interpreters—Enslaving/Enslaved/Runagate', 17. For a critique of Vincent's use of marronage, see the essay edited volume, *African Americans and the Bible: Sacred Texts and Social Textures*, ed. by Vincent L. Wimbush (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012). In the introduction – 'Reading Darkness, Reading Scriptures' –

parallel to that of the Ethiopian eunuch's, with its own encoded cultural symbols and practices, knowing that it would pose a threat to the constraining dominance of its parent culture.⁵⁶⁵ But at the same time, it might provide solidarity with an African whose experience of Judaism might also be subcultural.

Indeed, this (and the foregoing) abiding tension characterises Luke's personal site of liminality from which he views the African eunuch's marginality.

3.2.1.2 Anti-/ Post-colonial Cosmopolitan Theologian

It is well established that Luke writes with the postcolonial⁵⁶⁶ or, to put it more literally, anticolonial sensibility,⁵⁶⁷ as one who is theologically in touch with the circuit of power in the Roman Empire.⁵⁶⁸ But Luke's theology, I argue, is written more in the spirit of postcolonial ambivalence⁵⁶⁹ than anticolonial

Wimbush sets out his stall on marronage.

⁵⁶⁵ Stuart Hall builds on the subversion of the parent culture through subculture by adapting Claude Lévi-Strauss's notion of bricolage. Levi-Strauss theorises bricolage as a creative adaptation of raw materials and spaces to make new meanings. See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 1966). Hall takes this notion further and suggests that subcultures do this improvisationally, by using anything to hand, to disrupt the hegemonic spaces controlled by the parent culture. He instantiates youth culture to make this point. See Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, 2nd ed. (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), 178–79. Gates's *Signifying Monkey* does a similar thing as mentioned earlier. See Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, 47.

⁵⁶⁶ Note, that the prefix *post* in *postcoloniality* should not merely mean after coloniality along temporal lines, as a hyphen would suggest, as in post-coloniality, but along a critical trajectory *beyond* the colonial context in all its manifestation. See Peter Hulme, 'Including America', *ARIEL* 26.1 (1995): 117–123. Cf. Fernando F. Segovia, 'Interpreting beyond Borders: Postcolonial Studies and Diasporic Studies in Biblical Criticism', in *Interpreting beyond Borders*, ed. by Fernando F. Segovia (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 12; R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 12–3. See also Stephen D. Moore, 'Paul after Empire', in *The Colonized Apostle: Paul Through Postcolonial Eyes*, ed. Christopher D. Stanley (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2011), 9–23.

⁵⁶⁷ While the notion of postcoloniality connotes the agitation of "a dialectically tension-ridden space scripted by both coloniser and colonised", anticoloniality refers to the contemporary opposition to colonialism. Luke might therefore be loosely cast as a postcolonial writer; however, it might be historically more accurate to refer to him as an anticolonial author. In any case, his penmanship does have the sensibility of a postcolonial critic.

⁵⁶⁸ Burrus, 'The Gospel of Luke and the Acts', 134–40.

⁵⁶⁹ Hall argued that the *post* ought not to be misread as temporal but read as a critical, improvisational disruption, subverting the binary oppositions of the coloniser and the colonised, because it is characterised by complexity and ambiguity. A case in point, he suggests, is when the home societies of the colonisers, for example Great Britain, were inextricably complicit in the violent production of colonisation overseas. See

confrontation;⁵⁷⁰ indeed, from the perspective of the subcultural context of a Hellenised Syrian, Jewish initiate of The Way. It is difficult to tell the extent of his generational descent as Jewish. Perhaps that is not important. What is perceivable is a social location that is of an educated artisan who is probably subordinate to an elite patron such as Theophilus.⁵⁷¹ Yet, if he writes from the margins of a subcultural Jewish adherent, then his Hellenised, diasporic gaze could likely antagonise the centrality of the Jewish cultic institution by his eschatological remit to “the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Stuart Hall, ‘When Was the Post-Colonial? Thinking at the Limit?’, in *The Post-Colonial Question Common Skies, Divided Horizons*, ed. by Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), 242–60. This is why the *post* in *postcoloniality* is marked by a movement from difference (binary formations) to the Derridian *différance*. Jacques Derrida’s *différance* is central to his notion of deconstruction. A neologism, it is etymologically derived from two French words, ‘to defer’ (a reference to temporality) and ‘to differ’ (a reference to spatiality), producing a new semiotic definition, though phonetically retaining the same French sound, where the meaning of a word ‘is arriving but never arrives’ – my definition. Thus, in semiotic language, the meaning oscillates between the ‘signifier’ and the ‘signified’, leaving traces of its meanings in the past without totally losing its residual significance. The word was first invoked in Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl’s Theory of Signs*, trans. by David B. Allison (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 82, trans. of *La Voix et le Phénomène* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967). Later it was fully developed in Jacques Derrida, ‘Différance’, in *Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl’s Theory of Signs*, trans. by David B. Allison (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 129–60, trans. “La Différance” in *Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie*, Vol. LXII (1968). The corollary of Derrida’s logic is that the logocentrism of meaning is decentred when deconstructed and becomes a ‘play’ of a chain of non-referential signifiers, where the signifier and signified are never fully reconciled, but instead defer their differences to a suspended state of ambiguity – arriving but never arrived. *Différance* as a set of difference is therefore resistant to logocentrism. For a development of this thought, see Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Fortieth Anniversary Edition (Baltimore, MD: JHU Press, 2016), 92–7.

⁵⁷⁰ Muñoz-Larrondo, *A Postcolonial Reading of Acts*, 168–173, seems to highlight the postcolonial sensibility of Luke, for example, through Luke’s use of ‘mimicry’. For a discussion on the tension between the anti-colonial and anti-imperial stances of Luke, see Gilberto J. Medina, “The Lukan Writings as Colonial Counter-Discourse: A Postcolonial Reading of Luke’s Ideological Stance of Duplicity, Resistance, and Survival” (PhD diss., Vanderbilt, 2005), 119–125, 147–179. See also, Burrus, ‘The Gospel of Luke and the Acts’, 134, where it is argued that Luke-Acts maybe taken “as an instance of instance of postcolonial literature precisely on the basis of its frequently perplexing ambiguities and ambivalences”. Joshua Yoder, *Representatives of Roman Rule: Roman Provincial Governors in Luke-Acts* (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), 31–38, argues that notwithstanding his own shortcomings in intuitively recognising postcolonial tropes (given that his identity is closer to that of a coloniser than a colonised – his words, p. 38 n. 153), an exploration of the tension between anti-colonialism and postcolonialism identifies Luke’s consistent characterisation of ambivalence in terms of collaboration with and resistance to Roman imperialism.

⁵⁷¹ Halvor Moxnes, ‘The Social Context of Luke’s Community’, *Union Seminary Review*, 48.4 (1994): 385.

However, in the process, all Jews – Judaeans, Samaritans,⁵⁷² proselytes and diasporans – are reclaimed by Luke as Jews; and all Graeco-Roman Gentiles – including Godfearers – are extended the same hand of fellowship. This flattening of the ethnoreligious landscape is seen from the vantage point of Rome, in view of which Luke is probably composing most of his material. It is an ethnoreligious reclamation, an invitation of unification, where all the people groups (or nations) are persuaded to come to the Hebrew God.

Luke's account of mission engagement reflects his cosmopolitan sensibility. By cosmopolitan we mean, to quote Anthony Appiah's populist slogan, "universality plus difference",⁵⁷³ where culture is taken seriously, "not because cultures matter in themselves, but because people matter, and culture matters to people".⁵⁷⁴ Luke appears to be a citizen of the world like Diogenes (404-423 BCE) before him. I am not saying outright that he was singularly a cosmopolitan. Notably, 'cosmopolitanism' as a modern construct should not be anachronistically applied to antiquity, since the fit in meaning will not be exact, even if there is some continuity with its first iteration by the Stoic, Zeno (334-262 BCE).⁵⁷⁵ It is its spirit, which is consonant with seeing the world and people from a new global perspective without dumbing down the import of the regional, that seems to characterise his writings.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷² Josephus pointed out that Samaritans were happy to be identified as Jews or Gentiles according to how it suited them (*AJ* 1.291).

⁵⁷³ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), 151.

⁵⁷⁴ Kwame Anthony Appiah, 'Education for Global Citizenship', in *Why Do We Educate? Renewing the Conversation*, ed. by David L. Coulter, John R. Wiens, and Gary D. Fenstermacher (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 88.

⁵⁷⁵ Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen, eds., 'Four Cosmopolitanism Moments', in *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context and Practice*, by Robert Fine and Robin Cohen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 137–9.

⁵⁷⁶ Luke's international perspective is exemplified in Acts through his familiarity with a variety of institutions. What is striking here is his focus on people in spite of the institutions. He refers to synagogues

Yet, he writes as “a narrative theologian”.⁵⁷⁷ Yes, he skilfully navigates the different deities, philosophies, cults, magic and sorcery, but he does not theologise about them in a moralistic way.⁵⁷⁸ Instead, his theology is relational. It is about God and people.⁵⁷⁹ It is about how Luke, in the words of Jennings, “follows God on the ground, working and moving in and through the quotidian realities of struggle, of blood and pain, suffering and longing”.⁵⁸⁰

3.2.1.3 A Diverse Diasporic Audience

A possible reason as to why the Ethiopian eunuch cannot be conceived as a Jew is because Luke is thought to be writing to a Graeco-Roman religious audience that frames the African eunuch within a Graeco-Roman optic that privileges a Graeco-Gentile identity. Let us look at this in light of Theophilus.

The argument goes like this. Since the addressee in Acts, Theophilus, is addressed as ὦ κράτιστε Θεόφιλε (O most excellent Theophilus), it is fair to say that he was representative of a stratum of its readership, with whom Luke was

and temples, the Sanhedrin, Graeco-Roman deities such as Hermes and Zeus (14:11, 12), the goddess Artemis at Ephesus (19:24); the twin sons of Zeus (Διοσκούροι), and Castor and Pollux (28:11). Castor and Pollux became the popular names of the sons of Zeus, outlasting previous names, and eventually identifying with the constellation of Gemini, itself known as the Twins. See Hubert Cancik, Helmuth Schneider, and Christine F. Salazar, eds., ‘Dioscuri’, *Brill’s New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World. Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 4:518-521.

⁵⁷⁷ F. Scott Spencer, ‘The Narrative of Luke-Acts: Getting to Know the Savior God’, in *Issues in Luke-Acts: Selected Essays*, ed. by Sean A. Adams and Michael Pahl (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2012), 122. For work on Luke as a theologian, see Bovon’s survey in Bovon, *Luke the Theologian*; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Luke the Theologian: Aspects of His Teaching*, Reprint edition (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2004); Osvaldo Padilla, ‘The Speeches in Acts: Historicity, Theology, and Genre’, in *Issues in Luke-Acts: Selected Essays*, ed. by Sean A. Adams and Michael Pahl (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2012), 178, 184.

⁵⁷⁸ He notes different cults, such as Emperor worship (alluded to in 12:22 and 19:31). He is acquainted with different schools of philosophies, such as Epicureans, Stoics (17:18), and Tyrannus (19:9). Tyrannus is cited as, σκολῇ Τυράννου, where σκολῇ could mean either hall, or leisure or rest time. So, the meaning is not very clear. It could refer to Paul lecturing in a hall, or among the philosophers of Tyrannus during their leisure time. See LSJ, s.v. σκολή I.

⁵⁷⁹ Sugirtharajah amply makes this point in a potent but short article in R. S. Sugirtharajah, ‘Luke’s Second Volume and the Gentiles’, *ExpTim* 100.5 (1989): 178–81. His focus, however, is on how Luke’s theologising does not “vilify the religiosity of the Gentiles” (p. 178).

⁵⁸⁰ Jennings, *Acts*, 1.

likely to identify to an appreciable degree.⁵⁸¹ The salutation is in the vocative, *κράτιστε* (O most excellent), indicating a lofty status in Graeco-Roman society⁵⁸² – cf. the other citations of this usage in 23:26; 24:3; 26:25. Luke is manifestly an upwardly mobile man of the “higher strata of society”,⁵⁸³ and is probably writing at the behest of this patron, Theophilus, whom he also addresses in his introductions of the first volume, the gospel of Luke 1:3, as *κράτιστε* and the salutary, *ὦ*.⁵⁸⁴ Though the Jewish heritage of Luke-Acts suggests that Theophilus might have been familiar with Jewish religious culture, the strong Graeco-Roman historical references probably indicate that he was a Graeco-Roman of Godfearer persuasion, although this can in no way be conclusive.⁵⁸⁵ His elitism and possible Godfearer disposition would have predisposed him to appreciate a figure like the Ethiopian eunuch. Therefore, given the sometime incredible impression the Ethiopians historically had on Graeco-Roman cultural-political estimation

⁵⁸¹ Shelly Matthews suggests that Luke adduces the *topos* of high standing woman in Acts as part of his strategy of “missionary propaganda” to render the burgeoning Jesus movement more socially appealing. This was in keeping with other “missionary religions” of the day. See Shelly Matthews, *First Converts: Rich Pagan Women and the Rhetoric of Mission in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 72–95.

⁵⁸² Robbins, *Social Location*, 321–2.

⁵⁸³ Francois Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1-9:50*, Hermeneia, 3 vols (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 1:18.

⁵⁸⁴ If Theophilus is Luke’s patron, he would have been in the similitude of Josephus’s patron, the “most excellent Epaphroditus” (Ag. Ap. 1.1, *κράτιστε*; *Life* 430; *Ant.* 20.266). For a convincing support of this view, see Loveday Alexander, *The Preface to Luke’s Gospel*, SNTSMS 78 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 190–1; Witherington, *Acts*, 13; Burrus, ‘The Gospel of Luke and Acts’, 142. In light of the patron-client cultural matrix of the day, Halvor Moxnes rightly suggests that the relationship of Theophilus and Luke was not of equal social standing: Moxnes, ‘The Social Context of Luke’s Community’, 385.

⁵⁸⁵ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 52. Bock flags up the numerous passages in Acts that refer to Godfearers, suggesting that this uniqueness in the New Testament probably accounts for Theophilus identifying with them – Acts 10:2, 22, 35; 13:16, 26, 43, 50; 17:4, 17; 18:7. However, this mirror-reading and projection onto Acts of a possible construction of an audience warrants a cautionary note, in that not every citation of a group of people in Acts necessarily merits a particular, identifiable community in its readership. This is something that Bauckham’s edited volume highlights in *The Gospel for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences*, ed. by Richard Bauckham (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997). See especially Stephen C. Barton, ‘Can We Identify the Gospel Audiences?’, in *The Gospel for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences*, ed. by Richard Bauckham (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 173–94. It is in some ways a follow-up to John Barclay’s previous argument when discussing the audience of Galatians, where he first invokes the phrase, “mirror-reading”: John M. G. Barclay, ‘Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case’, *JNST* 10.31 (1987): 73–93.

because of their “wealth, wisdom and military might”⁵⁸⁶ – a point that will be taken up in the next chapter – the ‘proselytisation’ of the Ethiopian eunuch as a Gentile might have been most arresting for a status figure like Theophilus.

But does it follow that Luke is writing for a Graeco-Roman Gentile gaze?

Countless volumes on the literary function of Acts assume an exclusive Graeco-Roman Gentile gaze.⁵⁸⁷ Given the obvious correspondence it has with the Graeco-Roman literary conventions of its day – its alignment with models of storytelling as epic, for example – this gaze could hardly be averted. However, Luke does write from a Jewish-insider perspective. His cosmogony is more broadly ontologically Hebrew than Hellenistic, and his theology properly continuous with the concerns and perspectives of the Hebrew bible, even if quoting from the LXX.⁵⁸⁸ In which case, Luke appears to be couching his Hebrew epistemology within the Graeco-Roman rhetorical tools of his Hellenistic day. This may give

⁵⁸⁶ Abraham Smith, ‘Do You Understand What You Are Reading?’ A Literary Critical Reading of the Ethiopian (Kushite) Episode (Acts 8: 26-40), *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 22 (1994): 66. Smith draws upon several Graeco-Roman texts to demonstrate convincingly the high regard the Graeco-Roman world had for Ethiopians.

⁵⁸⁷ C. Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Graeco-Roman Age* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Judith M. Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); John R. L. Moxon, *Peter’s Halakhic Nightmare: The ‘Animal’ Vision of Acts 10:9-16 in Jewish and Graeco-Roman Perspective* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017); Laura Nasrallah, ‘The Acts of the Apostles, Greek Cities, and Hadrian’s Panhellenion’, *JBL* 127.3 (2008): 533–66, asserts “that Acts, embedded in a world negotiating Greco-Roman ‘barbarian’ relations, creates a story of the origins of a Christian city league that might be comprehensible and attractive to Rome, and in its logic offers seeds for a Christian empire that resembles the Roman Empire.” (p. 536); Bruce Longenecker, *Paul, Luke and the Graeco-Roman World: Essays in Honour of Alexander J.M. Wedderburn* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2003); *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting: Graeco-Roman Setting*, ed. by David W. Gill and Conrad H. Gempf, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994). Cf. Burrus’s postcolonial essay on Acts, Burrus, ‘The Gospel of Luke and Acts’. In many ways, most of the recent commentaries on Acts are predominantly Graeco-Roman facing.

⁵⁸⁸ Paul Winter postulates that Luke both quotes and deviates from the LXX and that his LXX source was probably a ‘Hebraistic LXX’, suggesting that Luke’s penchant for the Hebrew bible might have had something to do with his background. See Paul Winter, ‘Some Observations on the Language in the Birth and Infancy Stories of the Third Gospel’, *New Testament Studies*, 1.2 (1954): 111–121. Nigel Turner is more cautious in his conclusions, however. See Nigel Turner, ‘The Relation of Luke i and ii to Hebraic Sources and to the Rest of Luke-Acts’, *New Testament Studies* 2.2 (November 1955): 100–109. Matthew Black further postulates that Luke probably used the LXX as an aid, not denying the strong ‘Hebrewisms’ present. See Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 207, 256.

the appearance of a Graeco-Roman form that masks Hebrew content. Notwithstanding, the ideal readers of Acts, if mirrored by Theophilus, were seeking to be reassured and legitimised, in the words of Luke 1:3, in the reliability (τὴν ἀσφάλειαν)⁵⁸⁹ of the (historical) truth in which they were already instructed (κατηχήθης).

Then, could the first readers of Acts, including Theophilus, have conceptualised the Ethiopian eunuch as a Jew? In answer to this question, one must bear in mind that Luke is writing for a cross-section of Hellenistic peoples, whether Jews (inclusive of proselytes), Godfearers, of the Way, or Gentiles. But he does so with the ‘double-consciousness’ of a Hellenistic (Graeco-Roman facing) subcultural Jew of the (Jesus) Way. He has been called-out (and put-down) as a ‘Christian’. This enables him to see how ‘the Other’, circumscribed by systemic borders and conditioned to see their culture as superior to his because of his intersectional marginality, views him and people like him who are labelled ‘Christians’. If the liminality and cosmopolitanism of some of his readers could have imagined some actors in Acts as a Godfearer or even proselyte, then it is conceivable that given his Afroasiatic kinship the Ethiopian eunuch could have been imagined as a Jew. This is particularly probable when we consider later in chapter 4 some of the indicators of the actual text of the Acts narrative.

3.3 The Provenance of Acts – Framing the Story of Acts 8:26–40

In this section I simply point out my position on Acts. It is a biased, limited and value-laden text. Since this point of view is relatable to cultural scripts, it is best construed as a cultural production given the milieu and morays of the writer and

⁵⁸⁹ Τὴν ἀσφάλειαν is the last word of the long Greek sentence of Luke 1:1-4, and is therefore consequentially significant, pointing to a basis for reassurance and affirmation.

times.⁵⁹⁰ Therefore, Keith Jenkins is probably right in positing that the writer will always be on the margins of knowledge.⁵⁹¹ This is first and foremost because the writer is finite and in her limited way can only recapture the past for the epistemological conceptualities of the present. This informs our consideration of Luke's literary character in brief and its recension tradition more fully.

3.3.1.1.1 History or Historiography

In which case, this dissertation assumes all history to be historiography and with Acts all the more so,⁵⁹² notwithstanding the accurate handling of the traditions as referenced in the pedantic hermeneutic of Luke 1:1-4.⁵⁹³ In this way, reading the

⁵⁹⁰ In effect, stories in Acts are typically considered by some scholars to be constructed on the model of Hellenistic epic and related literature. See Dennis E. Smith and Joseph B. Tyson, eds., *Acts and Christian Beginnings: The Acts Seminar Report* (Salem, OR: Polebridge Press, 2013), Introduction, p. 3; Marianne Palmer Bonz, *The Past as Legacy: Luke, Acts and Ancient Epic* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2000), models Luke-Acts on Virgil's, *Aeneid*, which itself is modelled on Homer's *Iliad*.

⁵⁹¹ Keith Jenkins, *Rethinking History* (London: Routledge, 1991), 42.

⁵⁹² David Paul Moessner, *Luke the Historian of Israel's Legacy, Theologian of Israel's 'Christ': A New Reading of the 'Gospel Acts' of Luke* (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2016), 50–1. There are subcategories of history as historiography with respect to Luke-Acts, whether as independent volumes or together. For history in the generic sense of the word, see Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 77–80; for history as a literary monograph, see Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 3–4; for history as political historiography (in the similitude of Dionysius and Plutarch's *Lives*), see David L Balch, 'The Genre of Luke-Acts: Individual Biography, Adventure Novel, or Political History?' *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 33.1 (1990): 5–19, though this is somewhat tempered in a later publication, suggesting some overlap between biographical and historical categories – David L Balch, 'ΜΕΤΑΒΟΛΗ ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΩΝ: Jesus as Founder of the Church in Luke-Acts: Form and Function', in *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse*, ed. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2003), 139–88; for history as apologetic historiography in terms of Luke-Acts, see Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 311–89, and Todd Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins: Stephen and the Hellenists in Lukan Apologetic Historiography* (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004); for history as institutional historiography, see Hubert Cancik, 'The History of Culture, Religion, and Institutions in Ancient Historiography: Philological Observations Concerning Luke's History', *JBL* 116.4 (1997): 673–695; For history as origins story, see Burke, *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch*, 152–5.

For how speeches, for example, are expedient platforms for inciting a particular point of view, although their preponderance in Acts does question the plausibility of historiography in the classical sense of the word, see Richard I. Pervo, *The Mystery of Acts: Unraveling Its Story* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2008), 168–169. Keener discusses at length the cultural conventions of historians in antiquity, noting that their criteria were very different to modern historians. Acts is certainly not history in the modern, classical sense of the word, where historicity is given a high scientific premium. But it is intentionally and overwhelmingly grounded in history, Keener, *Acts*, 1:90–115. Keener convincingly argues that much of the elements of the stories in Acts are historically attestable. See further, Craig Keener, 'Novel's "Exotic" Places and Luke's African Official (Acts 8:27)', *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 46.1 (2008): 5–20. Cf. Weissenrieder, 'Searching for the Middle Ground from the End of the Earth', 139–40.

⁵⁹³ Loveday Alexander, 'Formal Elements and Genre: Which Greco-Roman Prologues Most Closely Parallel

Ethiopian eunuch's text (as with the rest of the volume) as historiography is avowed particularly as an ethnographic-like production in the political and religious sense of the word.⁵⁹⁴

3.3.1.1.2 Date

The dating of Acts does not significantly impact the argument of this dissertation, in that the conceptuality of the ethnoreligious identity and politics of the Ethiopian eunuch would not have shifted significantly between an early date of Luke, say 60s, or later date, say the close of the 90s to early second century.⁵⁹⁵

the Lukan Prologues?', in *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel: Vol. 1 - Luke's Narrative Claim Upon Israel's Legacy: Volume 1*, ed. by David P. Moessner (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 24; Loveday Alexander, 'Luke's Preface in the Context of Greek Preface-Writing', *Novum Testamentum* 28.1 (1986), 60–1. Moessner posits that "Luke is a Configurer (ποιητής) of oral and written traditions concerning events and matters purporting to have taken place in the real world of the author. By 'arranging' a new narrative sequence different from a number of predecessors, Luke imparts a new cognitive and affective understanding of these happenings", Moessner, *Luke the Historian*, 315. He then goes on to demonstrate this in pp. 315–31.

⁵⁹⁴ Keener, *Acts*, 1:24, 77, 113–21. This conclusion does not deny the plausibility of attempting to pin down a definitive genre for Acts, but does hint at a persistent indistinctness that is elusive of a conventional category. In *The Mystery of Acts*, Pervo conducts a useful critical survey of the different positions held on the genre of Acts: state history, ethnography, antiquities, biography, historiography and the Greek (historical) novel (pp. 164–71). He concludes, "Since the relation between historicity and genre is not on the one hand firm, while on the other hand, decisions or conclusions about genre are strongly affected by views of the text's historical accuracy, the debate about the genre of Acts is not likely to be resolved in the foreseeable future" (p. 170). Acts is likely an ideological production even if veering towards the ethos – not literary structure – of apologetics, given, one, its intention to reassure Theophilus of the Jesus Way in which he was formerly (and formally) instructed (κατηχήθης, Luke 1:3), and, two, that The Way, though compelling for enjoining the 'other', also attracts reputable people of the Roman οἰκουμένη and beyond. These two bases imply its apologetic gesture, not a formal *apologia*. See Loveday Alexander, 'The Acts of the Apostles as an Apologetic Text', in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews, and Christians*, ed. by Mark J. Edwards, Martin Goodman, and Simon Price (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 15–44. Here, Alexander makes the point that while the book of Acts is not essentially an apologetic in the specific ancient Greek genre category, it has all the flavours of apology: "Generically, Luke's choice of vehicle brings him closer to the world of 'popular' narrative and pamphlet than to the 'higher' forms of rhetorical discourse which were adopted by the later apologists: closer, let us say, to the novels, the martyrologies, the idealized philosophical biographies, or even the *Acts of the Pagan Martyrs*, than to *Against Apion*", (p. 44).

⁵⁹⁵ Most of Acts scholarship positions the dating of Acts to be between 70–85. See Keener, *Acts*, 1:383–401. For an additional full discussion of scholarship on dating Acts, see Hemer, *The Book of Acts*, 365–410, who focuses on earlier texts, and Richard I. Pervo, *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2006), who focuses on later texts. There is a very good critique of Pervo's position in Andrew Gregory, 'Acts and Christian Beginnings: A Review Essay', *JSNT* 39.1 (1 September 2016): 97–115. For history as a story of origins, see Sean D. Burke, 'Queering Early Christian Discourse: The

3.3.1.1.3 The MSS Recension

Since our text of the Ethiopian eunuch is affected by a significant variant in Acts 8:39, the implications of which are explored in section 4.2.1.7, some consideration should be made here of the two textual traditions. In approaching any text in Acts, one has to be mindful that there are two major text recensions of Acts: a group of MSS called Alexandrian, primarily attested to and represented by the codices Sinaiticus [ⲛ] and Vaticanus [B], and another group of MSS called the Western text (longer by 80 verses), led by the fourth century codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis (D).⁵⁹⁶

Much of scholarship has been preoccupied with questions of historicity in terms of historical priority and originality.⁵⁹⁷ A classic example is Peter Head's close analysis of the recensions, concluding that the longer codex D is a secondary non-Lukan revision of an earlier *Vorlage* close to the Alexandrian recension.⁵⁹⁸ The trouble is that these two recensions are not neatly different. In other words, the textual variants are not consistently independent from each recension. Sometimes ⲛ may bear witness to the Western text, thereby crossing the

Ethiopian Eunuch', in *Bible Trouble: Queer Reading at the Boundaries of Biblical Scholarship*, ed. by Teresa J. Hornsby and Ken Stone, SemeiaSt 67 (Atlanta: SBL, 2011), 145–46.

⁵⁹⁶ The nomenclature, 'Western', is somewhat of a misnomer, since the texts that come under its purview do not all attest to being strictly from the West. Nevertheless, the continued usage of these terms in scholarship perhaps justifies its continued usage. See J. Neville Birdsall, *Collected Papers in Greek and Georgian Textual Criticism*, vol. 3 of *Text and Studies* 3 (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2006), 29–43.

⁵⁹⁷ There are, however, a few discussions about the theological tendency of the Western tradition. See for example, Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Kirsopp Lake, *The Influence of Textual Criticism on the Exegesis of the New Testament: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered Before the University of Leiden, on January 27, 1904* (Oxford: Parker and Son, 1904); and J. Rendel Harris, 'New Points of View in Textual Criticism', *ExpTim* 8.7 (1914): 316–334. Eldon Epp has argued for an anti-Judaic tendency in codex D. See Eldon J. Epp, *The Theological Tendency of Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis in Acts*, SNTSMS 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966).

⁵⁹⁸ Peter M. Head, 'Acts and the Problem of Its Texts', in *Ancient Literary Setting*, eds. Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke, AIFCS (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 415–44. For other proponents of the Alexandrian texts, see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart; NY: United Bible Society, 1994), 222–36; Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles*, 1:1–29.

recension divide, other times the D has no comments, since the portion of text, albeit small portion, is missing. Hence, there is no consensus on which is the priority text, although it must be stated that a large number of the Church Fathers, including Irenaeus and Augustine, used the Western text.⁵⁹⁹ This, in the very least, would date the Western text prior to 150, since the copyist would have pre-dated the Church Fathers. Given the lack of consensus, it is probably best to treat this particular variant reading on its own merit, which I do in chapter 4. In which case, establishing the text of Acts 8:39 is critical to instrumentalising the agency of the Ethiopian eunuch.

On another related point, there is a papyrus that is unique to the stories of the Ethiopian eunuch and the centurion, Cornelius. It is P⁵⁰. P⁵⁰ (otherwise known as *P. Yale I 3*) is a folded, bifolium (two-column) pamphlet⁶⁰⁰ containing extracts from two conversion stories of the Ethiopian eunuch and Roman Centurion in Acts 8:26-32 and 10:26-31 respectively. It is a late third century papyrus, reflecting the Alexandrian tradition, especially κ and B.⁶⁰¹ While P⁵⁰ might be ‘unreliable’ as far as textual fidelity to an established manuscript tradition is concerned⁶⁰² – in that it is an extract with handwriting that is not measured, but a little wayward and at times illegible – the manuscript was probably significant

⁵⁹⁹ For proponents of the Western text, see M.-E. Boismard, *Le Texte Occidental Des Actes Des Apotres: Edition Nouvelle Entierement Refondue*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Peeters, 2000) ; Jenny Read-Heimerdinger, *The Bezan Text of Acts: A Contribution of Discourse Analysis to Textual Criticism*, JSNTSup 236 (London; New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2003); Josep Rius-Camps and Jenny Read-Heimerdinger, *The Message of Acts in Codex Bezae (Vol 3): A Comparison with the Alexandrian Tradition: Acts*, 4 vols, LNTS (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2007); Philippe H. Menoud, ‘The Western Text and the Theology of Acts’, in *Jesus Christ and the Faith*, trans. Eunice M. Paul (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 1978), 61–83; Epp, *Codex Bezae*.

⁶⁰⁰ The word, ‘pamphlet’ might be a little misleading, giving the impression of a systematised, produced two-page spreadsheet. However, its leaves are torn on the edges, and the extract of the two stories seem to be deliberately taken as an extract from a previous MS.

⁶⁰¹ *The Text of the New Testament: The Science and Art of Textual Criticism*, ed. Edward D. Andrews and Don Wilkins (Cambridge, OH: Christian Publishing House, 2017), xv.

⁶⁰² Philip Wesley Comfort, *Encountering the Manuscripts: An Introduction to New Testament Paleography & Textual Criticism* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2005), 269.

for interpersonal utility. It is most likely a missionary tract, since it contains short extracts of just the two major conversion stories. It was possibly written to aid the memorisation of the stories. It was possibly a personal evangelistic tract,⁶⁰³ though Timothy Johnson sees it as a possible memory aid for baptism,⁶⁰⁴ which is doubtful given that the core verses referring to baptism are missing.

Furthermore, its writing is very irregular, as though written at some speed, which is unsuitable for literary or liturgical purposes.⁶⁰⁵ Ben Witherington notes the significance of both excerpts to be that of including the verb, *κολλάομαι* (whether the deponent reflexive or the present passive of *κολλάω*, to join oneself to).⁶⁰⁶ If anything, this supports the postulate of P⁵⁰ being a missionary tract. In effect, the existence of the tract demonstrates the keen interest Egyptian Christians had during the third century of sharing the conversion stories of these iconic converts. *Κολλάομαι* is consistently employed in Luke-Acts and will be shown in the next chapter to be convivially a hospitality verb of joining, belonging and connecting across transgressive borders.

In sum, the Western texts have a particular bearing on Acts 8:37 & 39 for baptism and commissioning respectively. Overwhelming attention has been given to the text critical treatment of 8:37 for its baptismal relevance. Ever since the earliest commentaries, the focus has been on its value for baptismal dogmatics as seen

⁶⁰³ Aland and Aland refer to P⁵⁰ as a talisman. Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism*, trans. by Erroll F. Rhodes (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 85. It is also postulated as an amulet. See Stanley E. Porter, 'New Testament Manuscripts: Their Texts and Their World', in *Textual Criticism in the Light of Diverse Textual Evidence for the Greek New Testament: An Expanded Proposal*, ed. Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas, TENT 2 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006), 319. However, this is hardly the case. See John Granger Cook, 'P⁵⁰ (P.Yale I 3) and the Question of Its Function', in *Early Christian Manuscripts: Examples of Applied Method and Approach*, ed. by Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas, TENT, 5 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 120–21.

⁶⁰⁴ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 160.

⁶⁰⁵ Cook, 'P⁵⁰ (P.Yale I 3)', 117.

⁶⁰⁶ Witherington, *Acts*, 297, n. 70.

earlier in several Patristic writings. Consequently, the Western formulations of 8:39, with which we are more concerned, have paled in the shadow of 8:37.

3.4 The 'Narrative Turn' from Jew to Gentile in the Purpose of Acts

If the Ethiopian eunuch's postcolonial agency were seen to be credible, then an alternative view of his positionality in and coherence with the chronological trajectory of Acts, as viewed from 1.8 – which provides the rubric for the purpose of Acts – could be seen to be intelligible. A Jewish ethnoreligious identity would make sense of the positioning of his story in the storyline of Acts, especially as it precipitates the 'narrative turn' from the perspective of the purpose of Acts.

Though the purpose of Acts must be by definition influenced by the purpose of the gospel of Luke, to avoid reading Acts entirely through the gospel, we will concentrate, on the main, on the themes of Acts for its 'untreated' message.⁶⁰⁷

The general consensus for the strategy of Acts is that it follows the centrifugal, programmatic formula of Acts 1:8,

ἀλλὰ λήμψεσθε δύναμιν ἐπελθόντος τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος ἐφ' ὑμᾶς, καὶ ἔσεσθέ ὁ μάρτυρες ἐν τε Ἱερουσαλὴμ* καὶ ἐν πάσῃ τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ καὶ Σαμαρείᾳ* καὶ ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has descended upon you, and you will be my witnesses, first⁶⁰⁸ in Jerusalem, then in all Judea, then in Samaria, then to the end of the earth.

Many see this as the keynote or programmatic focus of the narrative of Acts, with 'the end of the earth' symbolised by the Ethiopian eunuch, in that he embodies his geographic origin.⁶⁰⁹ Martin argues quite convincingly for the geographic

⁶⁰⁷ Parsons and Pervo, *Unity of Luke and Acts*, 120.

⁶⁰⁸ The indeclinable, enclitic particle, τέ, in ἐν τε Ἱερουσαλὴμ is a coordinating conjunction, which Luke uses preferentially to denote sequence of time or space. We meet it again in Acts 8.28.

⁶⁰⁹ See, for example, Hans-Josef Klauck, *Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity: The World of the Acts of*

significance of the provenance of Ethiopia from Greco-Roman sources such as Homer (*Iliad*, 23.205-207), Herodotus (3.114-15) and Strabo (1.2.27) where Ethiopia lies on the edge of the ‘Ocean’ at the southernmost limit of the world.⁶¹⁰ The outward, centrifugal movement of Acts 1:8 provides the structural logic of Acts, but as we will see, not just westward to the Gentiles but southwards to the Africans.

However, I contend that Acts 1:8 is best construed not forensically as a linear, logical formula along geographical lines but as an imbricated *paradigm* for proto-Christian subversive expansionism across systemic borders and along ethnoreligious (and geopolitical) lines. The corollary is that Luke, before moving onto the mission to the Gentiles proper (as foreshadowed in the conversation of Paul in Acts 9), wished to deal with the mission to all things Jewish, even Jewish by distant, diasporic kinship. Hence, in this ‘narrative turn’ the Ethiopian eunuch, though himself foreshadowing the ‘end of the earth’ (1.8), represented ‘fringe’, distant or diasporic Jews. This is the last group to be canvassed before launching a missional outreach to Hellenised Gentiles, beginning with a friend of the Jews, Cornelius (10.22).⁶¹¹

In effect, the Ethiopian eunuch, while foreshadowing a symbolism of the ‘end of the earth’, is not *the* ‘end of the earth’ neither fully emblematic of Luke’s ‘end of the earth’. He signals the ‘narrative turn’ of Acts 1:8. In which case, the story of

the Apostles, trans. Brian McNeil (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2003), 29.

⁶¹⁰ Clarice Martin, ‘A Chamberlain’s Journey and the Challenge of Interpretation for Liberation’, in *Interpretation for Liberation*, ed. Katie Geneva Cannon and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Semeia 47 (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 1989), 111–16, 121. This accords with the accounts from ancient cartographers and historians – Strabo 1.1.6; 1, 2, 31; 2, 3, 5; 2, 4, 2; Homer, *Ody* 1.23; Herodotus 3.25; Propertius 2.7.18; Procopius, *De bellis* 2.3.52; Philostratus, *vita Apol.* 6, 1, 1; Philo, *de cher.* 99; idem, *de som.* 1, 134; idem, *de migr.* 181 – where Scythia lay to the North, India to the East, Ethiopia to the South and Spain to the West.

⁶¹¹ Hans-Josef Klauck agrees that if it is held that the universal mission of the Church could not begin before Paul, then the place of the pericope would be problematic. He therefore concludes, “thus it is here – and nowhere else – that the final programmatic point from Acts 1:8 . . . is genuinely fulfilled, in an act of prophetic anticipation” Klauck, *Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity*, 29.

the Ethiopian eunuch might be best construed within the rubric of the purpose of Acts. By focussing on the narrative turn as a moment of agency relations, a convivial optic will shed light, firstly, on how the ἐκκλησία movement facilitated the ‘turn’ westward to the Gentiles though it tended to lag behind systemic borders; secondly, on how the way (ἡ ὁδός) serves as a systemic, border crossing especially for the Ethiopian eunuch, thereby marking the ‘narrative turn’ southwards towards Africa; and, thirdly, on Acts as a book of diverse origins constituted even by Africa.

3.4.1.1.1 Lagging Behind Systemic Borders

There is certainly geopolitical expansionism contingent upon the two major ‘mission’ centres, Jerusalem and Antioch as alluded to before. But the promulgation of the gospel, of whom the Ethiopian eunuch is a critical beneficiary, is instrumentalised paradigmatically along ethnoreligious lines across systemic borders. His body presents a ‘systemic border’ to be crossed, which will be seen in chapter 4. Here, I wish to demonstrate that this notion of systemic borders is typical in Acts when viewed through convivial lenses. In which case, the Ethiopian eunuch story follows a literary pattern in Acts. Its uniqueness, however, is that it stands at the cusp of a ‘narrative turn’.

Steve Walton, in giving study to the question of the focus of Acts, persuasively presents four pieces of evidence to demonstrate that the focus is God and what God is doing in the world: “an analysis of clause and sentence subjects...; terms assuming or plying divine action; a consideration of the focus of the speeches...; and the development and growth of the mission in Acts”.⁶¹² In the first instance, Walton discovers that the word that has the highest incidence in Acts is θεός, God

⁶¹² Steve Walton, ‘The Acts – of God? What Is the “Acts of the Apostles” All About?’, *The Evangelical Quarterly*, 80.4 (2008): 304–5. Walton, mind, is not the first to suggest that God is the subject driver of Acts. For an example of where this is amply processed, see particularly, John T. Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts*, SNTSMS 76 (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

– unsurprisingly, though upon reading many commentators one might be forgiven for not knowing.⁶¹³ God, followed by κύριος (Lord), πνεῦμα (Spirit), πατήρ (Father), and Ἰησοῦς (Jesus), is actually the driver behind the events (or acts) in the Lukan narrative.⁶¹⁴ Like Walton’s other instantiations, God as the premier actor in Acts is very conclusive.

What is equally telling are the inferences that Walton draws from the primacy of the divine agency, whether through the impetus of the language, speeches and mission. It is that the ‘church’ in Acts constantly lags behind the divine initiative, and “the word of God/Lord” grows at the behest of the initiative of God. The first inference, the lagging-behind ‘church’, is worth sharing to demonstrate the purpose of Acts. I will stick to the two cases that Walton instantiates. Firstly, in 10:9-23, God drives Peter to join a Graeco-Roman centurion, Cornelius (10:1-8) – ἐγένετο φωνή πρὸς αὐτόν [a voice came to him] (v.13) – but the lagging-behind ‘church’ criticises him for eating with the Gentiles (11:2-3).

Secondly, in 14.1-28, God performed a number of deeds through Paul and Barnabas – παρρησιαζόμενοι ἐπὶ τῷ κυρίῳ τῷ μαρτυροῦντι [ἐπὶ] τῷ λόγῳ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ, διδόντι σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα γίνεσθαι διὰ τῶν χειρῶν αὐτῶν [speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of His grace, by granting signs and wonders to be wrought their hands.] (14:3); ἀνήγγελλον ὅσα ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς μετ’ αὐτῶν καὶ ὅτι ἤνοιξεν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν θύραν πίστεως [they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles] (14:27).⁶¹⁵ However, in 15:1-2, the lagging-behind ‘church’ (from Jerusalem) did

⁶¹³ Steve Walton cites some exceptions of scholarly attention to God in the works of Robert L. Brawley, *Centering on God: Method and Message in Luke-Acts* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), 111–24; Jervell, *Theology of Acts*, 18–34; Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts*; Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *Acts*, ANTC (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003). One may add more recent texts such as, Scott Shauf, *The Divine in Acts and in Ancient Historiography* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015).

⁶¹⁴ Walton, “The Acts – of God?” 291–306.

⁶¹⁵ Though this second example does not reflect the use of the nominative case, it is clear from the citations

not ‘get’ it, and argued with Paul and Barnabas, which resulted in what is commonly referred to as the Jerusalem Council (in ch. 15), where the ‘church’ council had to be persuaded about the creditability of the act of God through Paul and Barnabas.

Though I have presented these examples slightly differently to Walton, his deduction from these examples in addition to the other ways in which God is portrayed as acting is quite insightful: that despite God’s initiatives, the ‘church’ is constantly lagging behind. What might help Walton’s rhetorical analysis, however, is the hermeneutical lens of ‘critical conviviality’ – i.e., seeing on the historical ground the agency of collectivist hospitality, but from the psychical space of liminality and hybridity. Consequently, the nature of God’s leading and the actors affected by it might be more nuanced.⁶¹⁶

God, instrumentalised by the Holy Spirit, is constantly characterised as pressing people to desire other people whom they do not desire. This is because the engagement requires them to transgress systemic borders. Systemic, because in Acts ‘the Other’ with whom God is portrayed to initiate a (transgressive) joining is a person, but a person bordered by systems. This person, ‘the Other’, is often representative of something more: a bounded system. For the ἐκκλησία groups, the bounded system defines the limitations of the person, and that person becomes off-limits. It is the bounded systems that present borders, which God

that Luke perceives God as being the prime mover behind the witness of Paul and Barnabas. Walton, however, focuses on the nominative case of God in Acts 15:7-11, as reported by Paul before the Council.

⁶¹⁶ ‘Critical conviviality’ militates against bureaucratically isolating the words, grammar and rhetoric without considering the nature of the people engagement behind them. In effect, and without putting too fine a point on this, while Walton posits that it is the ‘church’ that is found to be consistently lagging behind the initiatives of God – Walton, ‘The Acts – of God?’, 301–02 – the gaze of ‘critical conviviality’ would nuance this by querying, “what characterises the initiatives of God?” Walton is correct to conclude from the rhetoric, that the ‘church’ is always having to play catch-up behind the initiatives of God. But critical to their catching up is the nature of the object of their pursuit. It is the nature of the object, to which God persistently invites, behind which they lag, and which causes them to lag. In Acts, it is systemic borders.

presses the lagging-behind ἐκκλησία communities to cross transgressively. Transgressively, because for the assailant the crossing is virtually unlawful. The bounded system could be *inter alia* gendered, as in the case of the ‘enslaved’ girl and her Graeco-Roman owners (Acts 16:16-24); politicised, as in the case of the centurion Cornelius (chs. 10-11); ethnoreligious, as in the case of the question of circumcision in the Jerusalem Council (ch. 15); socioeconomic, as in the case of the merchandising of silver statues (19:41); and disability-related as in the case of the cripple outside Gate Beautiful (3:1-16).

Then again, the bounded system could be ethnoreligious, even in the internal divisions between Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria and the diasporic Jews as represented by the Ethiopian eunuch. Moreover, the Ethiopian eunuch, could arguably be viewed as systemically bounded by each of the above vectors: gender (to which one might add sexuality), politics, ethnoreligion, socioeconomics, and disability. Indeed, his, in the words of Marianne Kartzow, is a “borderline identity”.⁶¹⁷ His body constitutes the compounded energy of bounded systems. And this borderline identity fittingly fulfils the missional promise of ‘to the Jews first’.⁶¹⁸

James Scott makes an interesting case for seeing Acts 1:8 as programmatic for kinship expansionism in terms of “three missions, according to the three sons of Noah who constitute the League of Nations: *Shem* (Acts 2:1-8:25), *Ham* (8:26-40), and *Japheth* (9:1-28:31)”. In which case, I would argue that in terms of 1:8 while Shem might systemically represent Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, Ham

⁶¹⁷ Kartzow, *Destabilizing the Margins*, 46–58. “Borderline identity” is the title given to the chapter that deals with “the contested body of the Ethiopian eunuch” (pp. 46–58).

⁶¹⁸ And the politics of his joining will be seen later – section 4.2.1.5 – to be informed by transborder conviviality. Sociocultural codes of hospitality would have rendered ancient communities to be relatively open to ‘the Other’, but to join a person or people alienable by systemic borders rendered ‘joining’ those persons forbidden.

represents the diasporic Jews on the fringes of Judaism, and Japheth the Gentiles. Across each 'son' systemic borders are being crossed. Scott makes his point by comparing the League of Nations table of Gen 10 with Acts 2 and suggests that the ethos is the same in terms of its "geographic orientation".⁶¹⁹ It is likely, then, when viewed in terms of kinship expansionism the pericope of Acts 8:26-40 can serve as a double entendre. On the one hand, it fits the ethnoreligious expansionism of 1:8 by concluding the mission promised to the Jews universally, and on the next, it prefigures the 'end of the earth'. But, again, he is not *the* 'end of the earth'. The Hebrew tradition conceptualises Gentiles as being at 'the end of the earth' (ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς, Isaiah 49.6). They are, as it were, *the* 'end of the earth'. It is no accident, then, that Paul conceives the beginning of his mission to the Gentiles at the beginning of his commissioning to (ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς, Acts 13:47; cf. 26:18, 23).

Therefore, Luke's above strategy of 'to the Jews first, and then to the Gentiles' ruptures literal and symbolic borders. This activism is played out along a centrifugal, geopolitical platform from Jerusalem to the 'end of the earth'. Yet, this platform simply conveys what I think the purpose of Acts is: that God's plan of invitation to all peoples – Jews and Gentiles – to join his salvific Kingdom, as worked through the life and ministry of Jesus, continues subversively across systemic borders in the expanding life and work of lagging-behind ἐκκλησία communities, and all inexorably at the behest of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the ἐκκλησία communities are to give witness (1:8) to the border-defying life of the Kingdom of God (1:3).

⁶¹⁹ James M. Scott, 'Geographical Perspectives in Late Antiquity', *DNTB*, 581. See also Hilary Le Cornu and Joseph Shulam, *A Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Acts*, 2 vols (Jerusalem: Academ, 2003), 414; Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 2:1297–9; Schnabel, *Acts*, 423; Keener, *Acts*, 2:1542.

Furthermore, the nature *and object* of God's initiative nuance an interpretation of Luke's picture of the missional gathering of the Jews first and the Gentiles second: that the inclusion of the Ethiopian eunuch's story strategically and symbolically completes the canvassing of the diasporic Jews, and his body as a constitutive of his Ethnoreligious agency epitomises systemic borders for ἐκκλησία communities to cross. This renders the border-crossing-actors in Acts – including the Ethiopian eunuch and Philip – activists for the gospel.

3.4.1.1.2 The Way as Missional Crossings

As identified earlier, central to the purpose and plot of Acts is mission. In Acts 1:8, Luke is alerting his diasporic readers to the strategy that the plot of Acts is missional and will be tracked along a voyage over land and sea.⁶²⁰ Floyd Filson focussed on the last third of Acts for its journeying motif – the travelogues (19:21-28:31).⁶²¹ However, a more useful way is to see the voyage as a literary tool tied to the plot-motif of 'the Way' (ἡ ὁδός).⁶²²

The Way is not just a historical identity marker, self-designating the becoming of a fledgling Jesus sect, it is also a conceptual tool for conveying geopolitically the missional systemic, border crossing plot of Acts. 'The Way', as in the Jesus Way, is mentioned explicitly five times at pivotal junctions: Acts 9:2 (the persecution wrought by Paul, then Saul, of men and women of 'The Way' – the missional way); 18:25 (the initiation of Apollos into ministry, signifying the recruitment and coopting of other leading agents into the promulgation of the gospel – Apollos is from ὁ λαός, 18:10); 19:9 (Paul's tactical change in teaching 'The Way' –

⁶²⁰ Alexander, "In Journeyings Often", 19–25.

⁶²¹ Floyd V. Filson, 'The Journey Motif in Luke-Acts', in *Apostolic History and the Gospel: New Testament Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce*, ed. by W. Ward Gasque and Ralph P. Martin (Exeter: Paternoster, 1970), 68–77.

⁶²² I acknowledge that the rendering of ἡ ὁδός here ought to be in the genitive case, τῆς ὁδοῦ. However, the retention of the nominative case is for rhetorical effect and will follow this way with other cases. The same will follow for different cases of ὁ λαός and τὸ ἔθνος.

As a result, John's disciples who were part of *ὁ λαός*, Luke's technical term for the 'people of God', are initiated into The Way through baptism, without necessarily leaving *ὁ λαός*, 19:4, indicating continuity between the old and new communities); 22:4 (Paul's personal testimony of his conversion to the people – *ὁ λαός* in 21:40 – of how he persecuted [the men and women of] 'The Way'); 24:14 (Paul's testimony inclusive of an apology of 'The Way' – which is adduced as a 'sect' of Judaism – before Felix, the Procurator of Judaea. Note that in v. 22, Felix is sufficiently apprised of the ascendancy of 'The Way', enough to hear Paul out further in vv. 24, 25 and to inveigle him into an inducement, v. 26, which Paul persistently refused (v. 27).

The mission of God advances with each citation of 'The Way'. But each stage is contingently articulated by systemic borders. Significantly, Paul is connected to each instance. 'The Way' appears to function conceptually not only to advance his movement towards Rome, but to highlight its different perceptions by different people vis-à-vis Paul himself. Luke does not presume a unitary, translocal religion that would centuries later cement into a cohesive, universal religion called Christianity. Not even Paul in 24:14 affirms nor owns the epithet, 'Christian'. 'Ὁ λαός', is instead closely associated with *ἡ ὁδός* as a movement. People from *ὁ λαός* (and *τὰ ἔθνη*) are initiated into *ἡ ὁδός*.⁶²³ Yet, in each case, conflict attends 'the Way'. It seems, then, that 'the Way', as a literary tool, is conceptually deployed to characterise the plot-motif of journeying to Rome and its attendant, phenomenal, missional growth, as inseparably bound up in the persistent strife of opposition and persecution. This missional ascendancy of 'The Way' is, however, not

⁶²³ The association of *ὁ λαός* with *τὸ ἔθνος* (pl. *τὰ ἔθνη*) bears commenting on briefly. Generally, the plural *τὰ ἔθνη* (used 162 times) refers to nations or Gentiles. In a relatively few cases, its singular form refers to the Jewish 'nation' (Acts 10:22; 24:2, 10, 17; 26:4; 28:19). Of the 141 times cited in NT, *ὁ λαός* is cited 84 times in Luke-Acts – 36 times in Luke and 48 times in Acts. This high incidence reflects Luke's theology of the people of God as constituting people drawn from the multiethnic dispersion of *τὰ ἔθνη*. Incidentally, of the 82 times cited in the Gospels and Acts, *τὸ ἔθνος* is cited 56 times in Luke-Acts – 13 times in Luke and 43 times in Acts. In which case, Luke has therefore concentrated his interest in the multiethnic dispersion of *τὰ ἔθνη*.

chronologically linear. It is emerging, advancing, retreating, beaten down, shifting, crossing. It is the crossing of the ways. Ways that lead to crossing systemic borders.

However, Luke's literary employment of ἡ ὁδός in our story is actually invoked three times. Once, in Acts 8:26, when the angel of the Lord instructs the Ethiopian eunuch to go southward on 'the way' to Gaza (κατὰ μεσουμβρίαν ἐπὶ τὴν ὁδόν), a desert place. Then after a bible study, while on the road (κατὰ τὴν ὁδόν), the Ethiopian eunuch is led to being baptised by Philip (8:36). And finally, after his commissioning – that is, if we take the longer Western reading seriously – he went on his way (ἐπορεύετο [...] τὴν ὁδὸν αὐτοῦ), rejoicing (8:39). What seems to be at play here is that ἡ ὁδός is performing a double entendre, where the literal road that leads southwards towards Gaza *en route* to Ethiopia could parallel the proto-Christian's designation of 'The Way', indicating that 'Christian' growth or expansion is about to enter the systemic crossing of empires – Rome to the north and Ethiopia to the south. Significantly, ἡ ὁδός typifies a systemic, border crossing southwards to Africa.

3.4.1.1.3 Book of Diverse Origins

What might further instruct our take on the purpose of Acts is the convivially conceptual notion of origins. Then it will be seen that the Ethiopian eunuch is included in the story to constitute the originary vision of a diverse beginning of 'Christianity'. Imaged as a black Jew, his inclusion may serve to disrupt the homogenising, whitening gaze of whiteness.

Sean Burke is correct to position Acts as a book of beginnings⁶²⁴ and to invoke Christopher R. Matthews's postulate that Acts was purposed "to produce an

⁶²⁴ Burke, *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch*, 145. Here Burke prefers the phrase, "book of origins" or "story of origins", though he posits this as a genre of sorts.

account of Christian origins that would show how those beginnings clarified and confirmed the social and cultural situation of Christians in Luke's time".⁶²⁵ In many ways, Acts attempts to reconstruct the beginnings of the proto-Christian movement in terms of a beginning. While this beginning is born from the efficacy of the resurrected Christ, its trajectory is not spawned linearly along a genetic route. In Acts, the efficacy of the risen Christ is spawned in ethnically diverse directions (e.g., Phoenicia, 11:19; 21:2; Cyprus, 11:20; 15:39; 21:3; and Antioch, 11:26; 13:1), of which one is pioneered by the Ethiopian eunuch. To make his point about beginnings, and without rehearsing the several texts of scholarship that have substantiated these points, Acts appears to appeal to the history of the beginnings of Israelite peoplehood.⁶²⁶ In effect, Luke raises echoes of the Torah, and in particular Genesis.⁶²⁷

⁶²⁵ Christopher R. Matthews, 'Acts and the History of the Earliest Jerusalem Church', in *Redescribing Christian Origins*, ed. by Ron Cameron and P. Miller Merrill, SBL Symposium (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2004), 174.

⁶²⁶ There is a wide consensus about Christian origins and Acts. See, for example, Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins*; Drew W. Billings, *Acts of the Apostles and the Rhetoric of Roman Imperialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 2–5.

⁶²⁷ For the appeal to Abrahamic origins in the speeches of Acts, see Marion L. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 61–4, 149–56; Robert L. Brawley, 'Abrahamic Covenant Traditions and the Characterization of God', in *The Unity of Luke-Acts*, ed. by J. Verheyden (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), 109–32. For the development of the Abrahamic motif of the Hebrew bible in Second Temple Judaism and other Christian writings, see Keith H. Essex, 'The Abrahamic Covenant', *Masters Seminary Journal* 10.2 (1999):191–212. For the installation of the restoration of Israel, see Bede, *Commentary on Acts*, 1.6. Bede makes the point that the disciples would have been aware of the theology of the restoration of Israel. Indeed, this was prevalent among sectarian Jews. Cf. 1QpHab V; 4Q385.3.3. The notion of restoration is a strong Isaianic theme – 42:1; 44:3; 59:21; cf. 11:1–10 – in (Afroasiatic) Second Temple texts, especially Qumran texts. See, Charles T. Fritsch, *The Qumran Community: Its History and Scrolls* (New York: MacMillan, 1956), 45–6. Isaiah 63:10–14 harps back to the Exodus experience in the Torah – a moment that defined the first renaissance of a new beginning of Israel – as a projection to a new restored future. See David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016), 208. For the representation of Jews from the diaspora in Acts 2:9–11 (the League of Nations) indicates, in part, the missional impetus of Acts of the gathering of the 'nations' first parried in Gen. 10. See Eckhard J Schnabel, 'Israel, the People of God, and the Nations', *JETS* 45.1 (2002): 49. The point to be made here is that Luke's version of the League of Nations is an update of several versions beginning with Gen. 10, through to Ezekiel 27, Daniel 11, Isaiah 66:18–20, 1 Chronicles 1:1–2.2, Jubilees 9–10, Qumran Genesis Apocryphon, War Scroll, Sibylline Oracles, and Philo. See James M. Scott, *Paul and the Nations: The Old Testament and Jewish Background of Paul's Mission to the Nations with Special Reference to the Destination of Galatians* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 5–28. Here, Scott suggests that the development in the iterations of the League of Nations also indicate how Josephus, among them, shifts the

However, there are attempts at erasing the place of Africans in the originary moment. For example, in Acts 1:12-26 we have the replacement of Judas Iscariot with Matthias to restore the number of disciples to twelve,⁶²⁸ who will eschatologically judge the twelve tribes.⁶²⁹ This theological inference is supported by the fact that Matthias never features again in Acts, indicating “that his sole function is to complete the number of judges”.⁶³⁰ This has echoes of the restoration of the Israel question formerly raised in 1:6-8 – the twelve tribes of Israel, a theme that originates in Genesis.⁶³¹ However, the twelve tribes are not confined to the tribe of Judah but must include the ‘lost tribes of Israel’. David Ravens substantially makes this case that Luke’s interest in the Samaritans is a fulfilment of this aim.⁶³² Glaringly absent from his argument, however, is the Ethiopian eunuch. For Ravens, the Ethiopian eunuch cannot be a Jew. Hence, he does not need to be included in the restoration of Israel. Yes, the Samaritans can be conceptualised as returnees to Israel, having been dispersed from Israel in 722 BCE by the Assyrians.⁶³³ The *Annals of Sargon* (738-720 BCE) speaks of about 27,290 Israelites being deported.⁶³⁴ But what about the other tribes to which Ravens alluded? His imagination appears not to be sufficiently convivial to

geographical centre of world from Jerusalem to Rome, owing in part to his Roman benefactors.

⁶²⁸ David Ravens, *Luke and the Restoration of Israel*, JSNTSup, 119 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 183.

⁶²⁹ Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, ‘Election of Matthias, Acts 1,15ff’, in *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Otto A. Piper* (London: Harper & Row, 1962), 178–92.

⁶³⁰ Ravens, *Luke and Israel*, 97.

⁶³¹ Michael E. Fuller, *The Restoration of Israel: Israel’s Re-Gathering and the Fate of the Nations in Early Jewish Literature and Luke-Acts* (De Gruyter, 2006). Choosing twelve to represent Israel was current, for example, in the Qumran community, 1QS VIII, 1. See E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1985), 104, 291.

⁶³² Ravens, *Luke and Israel*, 72–106.

⁶³³ The Jews and the Samaritans have different perspectives on the Samaritan deportation. See Ravens, *Luke and Israel*, 74–5.

⁶³⁴ *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament with Supplement*, ed. by James B. Pritchard, 3 rev. ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 284, lines 23-25. (ANET): 284, lines 23-25

suppose that any of the lost tribes of Israel, beginning with the end of King Solomon's reign in the tenth century BCE, could have migrated to the African continent. In effect, African Jews are not part of the restoration of Israel (from the diaspora), as far as Ravens is concerned. This invisibility motif is current in biblical studies. Few who study conquest and dispersion in ancient Israelite history dare to pursue the disappeared tribes, defeatist in the conclusion that there is no viable extant literature from that era that speaks to it.⁶³⁵ This could render the discourse susceptible to the charge of a politics of silence or even erasure.

The Abrahamic motif and reconstruction of the multiple beginnings of a new people in the Jesus movement set the stage for the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch as part of the missional and border-crossing trajectory of Acts 1:8. He is not the first Gentile convert, as will be more conclusively seen in the next chapter. In fact, as a Jew his function in Acts will be seen to be decidedly different. He will not merely bring ethnoreligious contiguity with the Abrahamic covenant but will be seen to facilitate the covenant for the internationalisation of the Jesus movement, as part of the plan of God.

Then what role does the Ethiopian eunuch's story play in Acts account of beginnings? Does he develop the Abrahamic motif of the Hebrew bible of the gathering of the nations? The African's conjunctural moment in the narrative arc of Acts 1:8 is a constitutive of Christian origins, but his link with the Abrahamic motif is possibly more that of a seal of approval, a ratification for the new Jesus movement, and yet for the 'restoration of Israel', since he is a significant constituent of the Jewish diaspora.

⁶³⁵ There are a number of texts written on the lost tribes but from other academic disciplines. Principle among them is, Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, *The Ten Lost Tribes: A World History* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

3.5 *The Construction of a Jewish Identity*

The question of why the Ethiopian eunuch cannot be imaged as a fully-fledged Jew raises questions of what is meant by the notion of 'Jew'. What constituted a Jewish identity? We already began to flesh out the ethnoreligious hinterland of first century Judaism when discussing the 'Parting of the Ways' in the last chapter for the purposes of demonstrating its genealogical link with the *Adversus Judaeos* tradition. Though there was no intent to be conclusive about the terrain, some useful points were raised, which, with some additional inferences, could serve as a premise for answering our question of what constituted a Jewish identity. This section is critical as it will highlight the important lineage of the nonrabbinic Jewish profile, which was probably formative to that of the Ethiopian eunuch. The convivial optic will enable us to see a diverse matrix of Jewish identities in flux formed from their various contingencies. This will serve to disrupt the dominant Graeco-Roman facing optic of readerships who insist on homogenising Jewish identities. There are four observations.

3.5.1.1 A Variegated Tapestry

One, the Jewish ethnoreligious type would have reflected the broad pool of (Afroasiatic) Second Temple Jewish identities, geographically inclusive of Palestine (principally Jerusalem and Judaea) and the diaspora, and in terms of the politicoreligious terrain, comprising Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, Essenes (*incl.* the Qumran provinces and Nazarenes), Godfearers, proselytes and the emergent post-70s rabbinic identities.⁶³⁶ These identities were not all necessarily confluent

⁶³⁶ Neusner, Green, and Frerichs. Significantly, there is a third century comment in the Jerusalem Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 10.6.29c, citing the profligacy of pluralism as the cause for the demise of Jerusalem: "Rabbi Johanan said, 'Israel was not exiled until twenty-four sects [kithoth, "parties, classes"] of heretics [minim, "sectarians"] came into being". The context is a discussion on Ezekiel. However, Ronald Kimelman demurs this claim of pluralism as a cause to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70, suggesting that it possibly reflects a third century irritation with the plethora of Jewish-Christian sects then co-existing. Cf. Ronald Reuven Kimelman, 'Rabbi Yohanan of Tiberias: Aspects of the Social and Religious History of Third Century Palestine' (New Haven: Dissertation, Yale, 1977), 178–9. Nevertheless, hyperbole or not, while reflecting Rabbi Johanan's socio-religious context of the multiplicity of Jewish sects back in his day, the quote probably

with the pre-70 emergent and post-70 consolidated rabbinic Judaism. Apart from the fact that it disagreed with the theology and praxis of an array of other Jewish iterations and preserved in predominant form its formative Pharisaic traditions, Rabbinic Judaism as reified in the second century and later Talmudic tradition⁶³⁷ did not include Jewish material from the (Afroasiatic) Second Temple Jewish era (Pseudepigrapha, Dead Sea Scrolls, Hellenistic writers such as Philo and Josephus,) apart from Ben Sira.⁶³⁸ Progressively, over a few hundred years, this self-conception as the (Weberian) ‘ideal’ type, believing that all things Jewish has its teleological realisation in a rarefied rabbinic entity, became normative.⁶³⁹

Lawrence Schiffman refers to the gaping absence of Second Temple literature in rabbinic Judaism as a cultural ‘hiatus’ and literary ‘abyss’.⁶⁴⁰ He further suggests that it was due, one, to the strict orthodoxy of Pharisaism upon which rabbinic Judaism was predicated, in that anything outside of what approximated the formational Hebrew bible was considered apocryphal; and two, due to what must have been their strong oral tradition of commentaries on the Hebrew bible, a tradition that emerged during this period. This oral tradition, later reified by and

echoes a not too dissimilar portrait in the first century. Goodman in his discussion of Jewish sects agrees with there being a high number of different sects. See Martin Goodman, ‘A Note on the Qumran Sectarians, the Essenes and Josephus’, *JSS* 46.1–2 (1995): 161–166.

⁶³⁷ Cohen recognises that pre-70 Pharisaism did not uniformly give way to post-70 Rabbinic Judaism, though it disproportionately dominated it. See Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Significance of Yavneh and Other Essays in Jewish Hellenism*, Text and Studies in Ancient Judaism, 136 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 44–70.

⁶³⁸ A number of key Rabbis considered Ben Sira as “a legitimate source of Jewish wisdom”, Jenny R. Labendz, ‘The Book of Ben Sira in Rabbinic Literature’, *AJS Rev.* 30.2 (2006): 347. Specifically, it is the Babylonian Talmud that quotes Ben Sira. Loren Stuckenbruck highlights several instances of this: (*b. Berakot* 48a; *y. Berakot* 11b; *y. Nazir* 54b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 91:3; *Qohelet Rabbah* 7:11. See Loren T. Stuckenbruck, ‘Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha’, in *Early Judaism: A Comprehensive Overview*, ed. by John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow, Reprint (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 190. Whereas, the Palestinian Talmud condemns its usage so that the reader does not confuse it with the Torah.

⁶³⁹ For a reflection on the challenge of employing rabbinic Judaism as a normative for diasporic Judaism, see Blake Leyerle, ‘Blood Is Seed’, *The Journal of Religion* 81.1 (2001): 27.

⁶⁴⁰ Lawrence H. Schiffman, ‘Early Judaism and Rabbinic Judaism’, in *Early Judaism: A Comprehensive Overview*, ed. by John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow, Reprint (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 421.

justified in the Tannaitic period (10-220 CE), was known by Josephus.⁶⁴¹ However, what Schiffman does not do as a matter of critical deduction is question the legitimacy of rabbinic Judaism *as the* single, narrow, dominant representation of the first century Hebrew-Jewish tradition. It is as though rabbinic Judaism was and is the sole heir of a pure strand of Judaism and that the life of multiple expressions or even versions of Second Temple Judaism were illegitimate and subsequently inconsequential even though they could not be properly traced and authenticated. Rabbinic Judaism is universalised as normative for many modern scholars.⁶⁴² Nonrabbinic Judaism, if not interpreted through rabbinic Judaism, is evaporated into nonexistence and feeds into a politics of erasure. Indeed, there is similarity in the way rabbinic Judaism and European Christianity refracted the formation of their self-identity through the lens of a Graeco-Roman imperial world.⁶⁴³ Whiteness would go on to celebrate this. Moreover, the fact that the Pharisees and later the rabbis failed to recognise any of the plethora of extra-biblical Jewish writings comprising all four centuries of the (Afroasiatic) Second Temple period suggests that that which was in existence at that time was of a strong nonrabbinic Jewish tradition. If anything,

⁶⁴¹ “The Pharisees had passed on to the people certain regulations handed down by former generations and not recorded in the Laws of Moses” (*Ant.* 13.297 [trans. R. Marcus]). Josephus goes on to state that these oral regulations were resisted by the Sadducees: “that only those regulations should be considered valid which were written down (in Scripture), and that those which had been handed down by former generations need not be observed” (13.297).

⁶⁴² Irina Levinskaya warns of the hegemony – my word – of the homogenising rabbinic optic for construing all things Jewish in the first century. “As a result of the great archaeological achievements in the field of the Jewish Diaspora, a new and sometimes unexpected picture of Jewish life had emerged and many of the old assumptions have been rightly questioned – among them the possibility of using rabbinic texts to understand Jewish life in the Diaspora and of applying rabbinic norms for the pre-rabbinic period. This cautious approach seems to be justified. Rabbinic norms were produced in a different milieu and reflect different stage of religious development” Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, ix.

⁶⁴³ David P. Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet: The Literary and Theological Significance of the Lukan Travel Narrative* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998); Luke Timothy Johnson, *Septuagintal Midrash in the Speeches of Acts*, The Père Marquette Lecture in Theology 2002 (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2002); Robert L. Brawley, *Text to Text Pours Forth Speech: Voices of Scripture in Luke Acts*, Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995); and Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, *Luke and Scripture: The Function of Sacred Tradition in Luke-Acts* (Eugene, OR: Fortress Press, 1993).

what we have emerging during this time, and culminating in the first century, is a broad, rampant and variegated Jewish ethnoreligious tapestry, one decidedly marked by a nonrabbinic lineage.

Jacob Neusner makes the important point to not conflate other Jewish texts with the Talmud and thereby distort the ‘rabbinic mind’,⁶⁴⁴ yet, the Talmud does not bode well for Africans. For example, some rabbis believed that blackness of the skin was the result of a direct curse of God:

Our rabbis taught: ‘Three copulated in the ark, and they were all punished – the dog, the raven and Ham. The dog was doomed to be tied, the raven expectorates (his seed into his mate’s mouth), and Ham was smitten in his skin.’⁶⁴⁵

Taking its cue from Genesis 9, this fifth/sixth century Babylonian Talmudic text is used to support the Hamitic curse exercised upon people of African descent. It is also related to other Jewish texts.⁶⁴⁶ Ethnic reasoning was often used to distinguish their Jewish identity from the threat of others. It was an argument for identity, one that has been instantiated in successive rabbinic histories of medieval and early modern times (even against the tyranny of pogroms),⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴⁴ Jacob Neusner, ‘The History of Earlier Rabbinic Judaism: Some New Approaches’, *History of Religions* 16.3 (1977): 217–8. More specifically, Neusner is concerned that given the sectarian nature of ‘rabbinic Judaism’ in the first century, in that it was not yet institutionalised, and given that their brand of theology and praxis was relayed through oral tradition, it is inaccurate to take first century commentaries and read them into the rabbinic tradition. The converse, I would add, is equally cautionary.

⁶⁴⁵ *Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud* (Ed. J. Schachter and H. Freedman; Rev. Ed.; London: Soncino, 1960), ed. by J. Schachter and H. Freedman, Rev. (London: Soncino, 1960), b. Sanh. 108b. Cf. Melamed, *The Image of the Black in Jewish Culture*.

⁶⁴⁶ See, for example, the quote of a medieval Spanish Jew who describes the African in a proto-ethnographic gaze, “There is a people ... who, like animals, eat of the herbs that grow on the banks of the Nile, and in the fields. They go about naked and have not the intelligence of ordinary men. They cohabit with their sisters and anyone they find... These sons of Ham are black slaves”, cited in Robert L. Hess, ‘The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela: A Twelfth-Century Jewish Description of North-East Africa’, *JAH* 6.1 (1965): 17. A much earlier midrashic quote is also *apropos*: “R. Huna also said in R. Joseph’s name: [Noah declared] ‘You have prevented me from doing something in the dark [sc. cohabitation], therefore your seed [Canaan] will be ugly and dark-skinned. R. Hiyya said: Ham and the dog copulated in the Ark, therefore Ham came forth black-skinned while the dog publicly exposes its copulation”, *Midrash Bereshit Rabbah* 36:7.

⁶⁴⁷ David M. Whitford, *The Curse of Ham in the Early Modern Era: The Bible and the Justifications for*

eventuating in a much later quest for white identity for survival.⁶⁴⁸ Nevertheless, whether the Hamitic race thinking might arguably be a conspicuous view of rabbinic thinking,⁶⁴⁹ it has not necessarily been the universal view. It is certainly not evidence of “ideological nationalism or scientific racialism”.⁶⁵⁰ Rabbinic thinking is not monolithic across the board, a point that David Goldenberg is keen to make, as there are a few texts that give an affirming view of people of African descent.⁶⁵¹ Nevertheless, an anti-blackness strain has persisted via rabbinic Jewish culture through to early modern times, though historically contingent and irregular.⁶⁵²

The racialised discourse, however, is also thought to have arisen out of a need to justify the Hebrew conquest of the Canaanites.⁶⁵³ The Canaanites were the enemy and needed to be denigrated in order to exonerate the genocide. What appears to be neglected in this justification, though, is how the racialised optic is inscribed

Slavery (London; New York: Routledge, 2017), 10.

⁶⁴⁸ Melamed, *The Image of the Black in Jewish Culture*, 167. Jonathan Schorsch also makes a similar point about attitudes to Iberian Sephardim Jews of the seventeenth century. Schorsch posits that “in both Iberian Catholic and northwest-European Protestant colonial spheres, Conversos [Jews who often by force converted to Catholicism] and Sephardim sought through anti-Blackness to identify themselves (and hopefully for others to identify them) as members of the dominant White culture and ruling class, their religious otherness aside.” The Sephardim Jews did this in post-1492 Iberia in an effort to etch out and secure their own collective identity against the danger of the Spanish Inquisition. See Jonathan Schorsch, ‘Blacks, Jews and the Racial Imagination in the Writings of Sephardim in the Long Seventeenth Century’, *Jewish History* 19.1 (2005): 109.

⁶⁴⁹ There were other (nonrabbinic) interpretation of Gen. 9 such as that of Josephus, where he rightly points the charge of curse onto Canaan, being clear that Ham and his descendants escaped the curse (*Ant.* 1.140-42).

⁶⁵⁰ Ephraim Isaac, ‘Genesis, Judaism and the Sons of Ham’, in *Slaves and Slavery in Africa: Islam and the Ideology of Enslavement*, ed. John Ralph Willis, vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 2016), 86. Isaac, citing several examples, carefully notes that rabbinic texts are often misquoted and misrepresented to present a Talmudic racial theory. A case in point is the entry: Joseph Jacobs and M Seligsohn, ‘Ham’, *The Jewish Encyclopaedia* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1906), 186.

⁶⁵¹ David M. Goldenberg, ‘The Curse of Ham: A Case of Rabbinic Racism?’, in *Struggles in the Promised Land: Toward a History of Black-Jewish Relations in the United States: Towards a History of Black-Jewish Relations in the United States*, ed. Jack Salzman and Cornel West (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 37.

⁶⁵² Melamed, *The Image of the Black in Jewish Culture*, 212–23.

⁶⁵³ Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham*, 34–5.

by violence, both epistemic and material. To go into this with any appreciable depth is outside the purview of this dissertation.⁶⁵⁴ However, the politics of the Curse of Ham discourse are well established as complicit in the subjugations of Africans and the diaspora through the technology of conquest, enslavement and colonisation. This terror, stigma and demonisation arguably live on.

One wonders, then, whether the question of the potential Jewishness of the Ethiopian eunuch might be habitually benchmarked by this rabbinic measuring index, even outside the Curse of Ham discourse. The rabbinic optic, exclusive of (Afroasiatic) Second Temple literature, later institutionalised in the Talmud along with other rabbinic texts, and as such adopted by many (Christian) biblical studies scholars, might be suspicious today of all things nonrabbinic.⁶⁵⁵ If what happened eventuated as a marginalisation of the (Afroasiatic) Second Temple literature and traditions, then a blanket denial of a nonrabbinic lineage of Judaism today is a repeat of this erasure. In which case, the Ethiopian eunuch cannot be a Jew since the dispersion of Jewishness cannot be conceivably beyond the identifiable rabbinic settlements in the diaspora. He cannot be a Jew because there is no continuity between rabbinic Judaism and Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa.

⁶⁵⁴ There is a wealth of research done on the Hamitic curse and its violent consequences. See especially David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Melamed, *The Image of the Black in Jewish Culture*; Charles Copher, 'The Black Presence in the Old Testament', in *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*, ed. by Cain Hope Felder (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 146–65.

⁶⁵⁵ The eminent Harvard scholar, George Foot Moore, has been criticised, for instance, for coining the term, 'normative Judaism' in reference to Second Temple Judaism to mean rabbinic Judaism. See S. Talmon, 'The Concepts of Masiah and Messianism in Early Judaism', in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. by James Hamilton Charlesworth (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Publishing, 1992), 101. However, in his defence, he might have been rather positivistic since his mammoth monograph was published several years before the Dead Sea Scroll, whose find considerably changed the landscape of understanding Second Temple Judaism. See George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of Tannaim*, 3 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927).

3.5.1.2 A Heterogeneous People

Two, the Afroasiatic Jews, whether diasporic or Judaeian, were not ethnically a homogenous entity.⁶⁵⁶ Popular Christian usage tends to homogenise first century Judaism through the prism of rabbinic Judaism. It reads rabbinic Judaism anachronistically back into antiquity.⁶⁵⁷ Blake Leyerle highlights the challenges this legacy has for scholarship when he asserts: “with a few exceptions, all our textual evidence for late antique Judaism comes from rabbinic circles [...] we must use these same sources, albeit with heightened caution”.⁶⁵⁸ Judaism, as has been alluded to above, accommodated different communities around different (Afroasiatic) Second Temple texts.⁶⁵⁹ The diversity of ethnoreligious traditions was attended by different ethnocultural ways of life. This was enhanced through the support of the Imperial *Pax Romana*, which allowed for a great degree of cultural and religious self-determination. This was also largely due in part to many Jews successfully integrating into their local home cultures (e.g., Alexandrian Jews),⁶⁶⁰ though to varying degrees, since some attempts, for instance, were met with resistance from both Jews and Gentiles at different times. Furthermore, their efforts would have been contingent on their theology of integration and conviviality, which itself would have been inflected by population size, strength of subculture and strength of corporate identity. This is notwithstanding the way established traditions of praxis both historically and

⁶⁵⁶ Sylvia Barack Fishman, *The Way into the Varieties of Jewishness* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2007), 2, 7–43.

⁶⁵⁷ Critical scholarship warns against the popular tendency to homogenise Judaism through the lens of rabbinic Judaism. See Gabriele Boccaccini, ‘History of Judaism: Its Periods in Antiquity’, in *Judaism in Late Antiquity 2: Historical Syntheses*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 296.

⁶⁵⁸ Leyerle, ‘Blood Is Seed’, 27.

⁶⁵⁹ James D. G. Dunn, ‘Judaism in the Land of Israel in the First Century’, in *Judaism in Late Antiquity 2. Historical Syntheses*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 230.

⁶⁶⁰ R. J. H. Shutt, ‘The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Expansions of the “Old Testament” and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms, and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works’, ed. by James H. Charlesworth, *Letter of Aristeas* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 9.

culturally inform the politics of identity. Then, contact between the groups would have been variously articulated by circumstantial contingencies of trade, pilgrimage, migration and work, depending on the geopolitics of where one lived. In which case, we must keep in mind that Luke, a travelling artisan, inflected by an anticolonial, cosmopolitan sensibility would have had acute awareness of the patently nonrabbinic, even pre-rabbinic strand of a heterogeneous Judaism.

Yet, the ethnoreligious complexity of Judaism was compounded by the fact that much of diasporic and Palestinian Judaism was indeed Hellenistic. However, as we have already noted, Luke, marked by his own diasporic cosmopolitanism does not only write for a Graeco-Roman gaze.

3.5.1.3 Proselytes and Godfearers

Three, as alluded to earlier, the Jewish identity of the Ethiopian eunuch has been ‘downgraded’ to that of either a proselyte or Godfearer. But even these identities are not straightforward. For example, the designation of ‘Jewish proselyte’ need not have referred to a Graeco-Roman Gentile converted to Judaism; it could refer to a (diasporic) Jew ‘converted’ by a Pharisee to follow the halakha.⁶⁶¹ Although this position is from a rabbinic benchmark point of view, it demonstrates the complexity of the ancient terms used to define groups. Gentiles were sometimes converted, but more often they joined (Afroasiatic) Judaism out of their own volition. In which case, they were regarded as proper Jews.⁶⁶²

Two phrases are often identified in Acts to mean Godfearer: *οἱ φοβούμενοι* (τὸν θεόν) – Acts 10:2, 22, 35; 13:16, 26; 17:17) and *οἱ σεβόμενοι* (τὸν θεόν) – 13:43, 50; 16:14; 17:4, 17; 18:7. An extra-biblical third phrase is attested to by post-70

⁶⁶¹ Goodman, *Mission and Conversion*, 70–4. Goodman reads this in the imprecation of Jesus against Pharisees in Matthew 23.15 (“you travel across sea and land to make a proselyte, and when you achieve this you make him twice as much a son of Gehenna as you are”).

⁶⁶² Shaye J. D. Cohen, ‘Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew’, *HTR* 82.1 (1989): 13–33.

Jewish inscriptions and literary sources to mean also Godfearer, ὁ θεοσεβής.⁶⁶³ The Godfearers are a group of Graeco-Gentiles who were attracted and devoted to the Jewish religion, attending their synagogues and festivals, though without becoming fully-fledged, signed-up members of the faith.⁶⁶⁴ Cohen argues that though there is historical evidence for this group, one of the reasons why they might not have been a substantive group is because there was no apparent missionary activity among them by the Jews. Incidentally, Cohen also cites later rabbinic sources that referred to “fearers of Heaven” – יראי שמים.⁶⁶⁵ But there is no transliteration of this into Koine Greek. Even if they were not attributed with what certainly became an epithet, there is ample evidence of Gentile sympathisers committing themselves to Judaism without being fully converted.⁶⁶⁶ They formed a third group within the Jewish and Graeco-Roman matrix, and in some ways, was a hybrid group of Jewish and Gentile aspirations.

The various terminologies of Godfearer in literary texts and inscriptions probably reflect regional variations of this category.⁶⁶⁷ These variations are further

⁶⁶³ There is an example of the Godfearer inscription cited by Joyce Maire Reynolds and Robert F. Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers at Aphrodisias: Greek Inscriptions with Commentary: Texts from the Excavations at Aphrodisias Conducted by Kenan T. Erim*, Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society, Supp. XII (Cambridge: Philological Society, 1987), 48–66. This synagogue inscription is thought to be an early third century one. Graham Stanton argues for two other cited inscriptions. One is a probable first century inscription in Panticapaeum on the north coast of the Black Sea; the other, a late second century or early third century inscription, is in a Roman theatre at Miletus – Graham Stanton, *Studies in Matthew and Early Christianity*, WUNT 309 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 352–53. Both, however, can only be interpreted as Godfearers if, as Stanton argues and for very good reasons, there were grammatical mistakes made by the respective stonemasons. This expression, however, was claimed and counterclaimed by different religious groups – whether Cassius Dio Marcus Aurelius (*Hist. Rom.* xxii. 34.2; *Medit.* xi.20.2), Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Antiq. Rom.* ii.60.4; *Ep. Ad Pomp.* 4.2.7), Josephus in describing David and the Maccabean supporters (*Ant.* vii.7.1 (130); xii.6.3 (284)), and the Christian document, *Epistle to Diogenes* (3:1-3; 4:5-6; 6:4). See Judith Lieu, ‘The Race of the God-Fearers’, *JTS* 46.2 (1995): 497.

⁶⁶⁴ Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Significance of Yavneh and Other Essays in Jewish Hellenism*, Text and Studies in Ancient Judaism 136 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 299–308,

⁶⁶⁵ Cohen, *The Significance of Yavneh*, 330–52.

⁶⁶⁶ Thomas Finn M., ‘The God-Fearers Reconsidered’, *CBQ* 47.1 (1985): 75–84; Louis H. Feldman, *Jewish Life and Thought among Greeks and Romans: Primary Readings* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1996), 137–45.

⁶⁶⁷ Feldman, *Jewish Life and Thought among Greeks and Romans*, xvi–xvii; Louis H Feldman, ‘The

compounded by the different degrees and nature of the Graeco-Gentile attachments to Judaism. Luke's usage, therefore, reflects his own reading of the rich religious tapestry and associations of first century Judaism, and his ascriptions were most likely intelligible to his audience.

Since reference has been made several times to the ethnoreligious agency of the Ethiopian eunuch, whether he is a proselyte or Godfearer, it will suffice to summarise the position of the argument so far. I am theorising a different option from the popular charge of a Godfearer or proselyte. Neither option of him being recently proselytised nor a sympathiser of the Jewish faith is demonstrably plausible, unless it can be shown conclusively that ancient Ethiopians were not Jews. The former proselyte option is suggested in NT scholarship as indicated earlier in the chapter. The second option suggests that he was a Jewish sympathiser in a way that the Graeco-Romans were in the first century Mediterranean basin – a Godfearer.

3.5.1.4 Ἰουδαῖος – A Composite, Floating Signifier

Finally, four, Ἰουδαῖος is a composite, floating signifier, porous in its formation,⁶⁶⁸ trying to reconcile competing cultural, ethnic and religious interests in disparate

Omnipresence of the God-Fearers', *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 12.5 (1986): 58.

⁶⁶⁸ Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1999), 5. Although Josephus does give Ἰουδαῖος a dual meaning: Jew (religion) and Judaeans (geographic). When examining the word, Ἰουδαῖος, Cohen discerns that its transition in semantic usage perhaps mirrored the changes that Jewish ethnoreligious identity underwent. This would have been from the fourth century (BCE) biblical book of Esther, which is normally credited with its first technical usage in Esther 2:5 – יְהוּדָיִים (Ἰουδαῖος, LXX). It moved from primarily an ethnic/geographical marker to a more cultural one during the Maccabean period when the Hasmoneans formed Hellenistic alliances. Then after the collapse of the Hasmoneans, retaining its cultural identity, Ἰουδαῖος took on a more religious emphasis (pp. 104–5). This would have been in tandem with the first citation of its cognate Ἰουδαϊσμός [Judaism] as a technical usage for Judaism as a post-exilic 'shaped' way of life. (See 2 Macc. 2:21; 8:1; 14:38; 4 Macc. 4:26; *Esth. Rab.* 7, 11; and later in Gal. 1:13-14 probably in contrast with Χριστιανισμός, which itself is a post-biblical word.) The first Hebrew equivalent for Ἰουδαϊσμός occurred in Medieval literature – Mariusz Rosik, *Church and Synagogue (30-313 AD): Parting of the Ways*, European Studies in Theology, Philosophy and History of Religions 20 (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2019), 11.

sites of the diaspora. The identity and agency of the Ethiopian eunuch must be construed in this fluid context.

In the book of Acts, the concept of people is represented in the binary terms of *ὁ λαός* and *τὰ ἔθνη*, which themselves are interchangeably translations of the Hebrew *עַם*. *Ὁ λαός* invariably refers to Israel as the ‘people’ of God.⁶⁶⁹ In this way, it is a relational word. *Τὰ ἔθνη* (the plural of *τὸ ἔθνος*), on the other hand, generally refers to the (other) peoples, commonly translated ‘Gentiles’. However, it is used in the singular (*ἔθνος*) fifteen times within the Second Temple period in reference to Israel as a people.⁶⁷⁰ People or peoplehood in these references are devoid of the modernist notion of race as marked by biology. Instead, *ὁ λαός* and *τὰ ἔθνη* are referenced by the notion of religious belonging: *ὁ λαός* to God and *τὰ ἔθνη* to other gods. Hence, the relationality of the terms.

Steve Mason, through a linguistic study of the Jewish cognate appellatives – *Ἰουδαῖοι* (Judaean), *Ἰουδαϊσμός* (Jewishness),⁶⁷¹ *Ἰουδαϊκός* (Jewish) and *Ἰουδαΐζω* (to Judaize) – argues fairly persuasively that the translations of these terms are not essentially equivalent. This is because by the first century there was no notional particularity of ‘Judaism’ as mere religion *per se* in the mindset of the Graeco-Roman world.⁶⁷² During the (Afroasiatic) Second Temple period, the

⁶⁶⁹ Jervell, *Theology of Acts*, 23. He is right to point out that of the 142 times used in the New Testament *λαός* is used 84 times in Acts.

⁶⁷⁰ The singular *ἔθνος*, signifying Israel, is found in Josephus, *Ant.* 1.146; 19.278; and in Philo, *Decal.* 96; *Spec.* 2.163, 166; 4.179, 224; *Abr.* 98; *Congr.* 3; *T. Ben.* 10.5–6. For other texts, see 1 Macc. 3:59; Tob. 1:3. It is sparingly and uncommonly adopted in LXX as referring to Israel (e.g. Gen 12:2). In Acts we find it in 10:22; 24:2, 10, 17; 26:4; 28:19.

⁶⁷¹ While Mason problematises *Ἰουδαϊσμός* to mean ‘Judaisation’ in apposition to *Ἑλληνισμός* (a ‘Hellenising’), Shaye Cohen argues rather for the translation ‘Jewishness’ in Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 8, 132–135, 341–49. *Ἰουδαϊσμός* was first instantiated as a distinct conceptual category in juxtaposition to *Ἑλληνισμός* in 2 Maccabees (2 Macc 8.1 and 2 Macc 4.13 respectively). Douglas Boin persuasively argues that *Ἑλληνισμός* was constructed as a ‘straw man’ to belittle Jews who were leading a diluted form of the ‘real Judaism’, for which *Ἰουδαϊσμός* gallantly stood for, by acting ‘Greek’. See Douglas Boin, ‘Hellenistic “Judaism” and the Social Origins of the “Pagan-Christian” Debate’, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 22.2 (6 June 2014): 176–80.

⁶⁷² Steve Mason, ‘Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History’, *JSJ*

‘Jews’ were regarded in terms of their ethnicity, as Judaeans. The religious connotations, Mason argues, came much later by outsiders such as the Church Fathers. In fact, he concludes that virtually all of the commentators during the late (Afroasiatic) Second Temple regarded Judaeans identity as an ethnicity tied to land, in the same way that Egyptian, Syrian and Athenians might be understood.⁶⁷³ Take for instance, the following first century extract of Philo *Embassy (Legatio ad Gaium)*, 281-282:

Concerning the holy city [ἱεροπόλεως] I must now say what is necessary. It, as I have already stated, is my native country [πατρίς], and the metropolis [μητρόπολις], not only of the one country of Judaea, but also of many, by reason of the colonies [ἀποικίας] which it has sent out from time to time into the bordering districts [τὰς ὁμούς] of Egypt, Phoenicia, Syria in general, and especially that part of it which is called Coelo-Syria, and also with those more distant regions of Pamphylia, Cilicia, the greater part of Asia Minor as far as Bithynia, and the furthestmost corners of Pontus. And in the same manner into Europe, into Thessaly, and Boeotia, and Macedonia, and Aetolia, and Attica, and Argos, and Corinth and all the most fertile and wealthiest districts of Peloponnesus. (282) And not only are the continents full of Jewish colonies [Ἰουδαϊκῶν ἀποικιῶν], but also all the most celebrated islands are so too; such as Euboea, and Cyprus, and Crete. “I say nothing of the countries beyond the Euphrates”.

This section is part of a longer petition, which King Agrippa of Judaea presents to the emperor Gaius Caligula (37-41), requesting him to reconsider erecting a statue of himself in the Jerusalem Temple. Agrippa, known to be a close ally, wishes to demonstrate to the emperor the devotion Jews all over the diaspora have for their mother city (μητρόπολις), Jerusalem. His reasoning highlights, however, the affinity the diaspora have for their homelands. In extolling the high

38.4/5 (2007): 457–512.

⁶⁷³ Mason, ‘Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism’, 496. Incidentally, even later, early rabbinic texts referred to diasporic Jews without the ‘Jewish modifier’ according to the land in which they lived: *z. Hallah* 4:10-11; *m. Shabbat* 6:6.

regard the diasporic Jews have for the temple of the mother city, he is scrupulous in distinguishing it as the capital, so to speak, of his native homeland, Judaea (or fatherland, *πατρίς*) – note the possessive singular pronoun, *ἐμῇ* – from that of Jews of the diaspora. The diasporic Jews have their own native homelands, which are not the same as Judaea. Agrippa is not their countryman. By noting lands by name – e.g., Pamphylia, Cilicia, Pontus Macedonia, and Aetolia, and Attica, and Argos, and Corinth – Agrippa is presented as assuming that the Jews living there are natives. Their ethnicity, kinship and inheritance are tied to their homelands, even though they enjoy a spiritual affinity with the distant, but religious centre and mother city, Jerusalem, no doubt because of its celebrated holy temple (*ὁ τοῦ ὑψίστου θεοῦ νεὼς ἅγιος*, the sacred shrine of the Most High, 278). It is arguable that Agrippa, by tying the diasporic Jews to the centripetal pull of Jerusalem, is espousing a common ethnicity across the board.

Cynthia Baker, in commenting on another passage of Philo's, *Flaccus* 46, incisively demonstrates that Philo regards homelands to have precedent over the mother city:⁶⁷⁴

For so populous are the Jews [*Ἰουδαίους*] that no one country can hold them, and therefore they settle in very many of the most prosperous countries in Europe and Asia both in the islands and on the mainland, and while they hold the Holy City [*ἱερόπολιν*] where stands the sacred Temple [*νεὼς ἅγιος*] of the most high God to be their mother city [*μητρόπολιν*], yet those which are theirs by inheritance from their fathers, grandfathers, and ancestors even farther back, are in each case accounted by them to be their fatherland [*πατρίδας*] in which they were born and reared [*ἐγεννήθησαν καὶ ἐτρέφησαν*], while to some of them they have come

⁶⁷⁴ Cynthia M. Baker, "From Every Nation under Heaven": Jewish Ethnicities in the Greco-Roman World', in *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings: Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christianity*, ed. Laura Nasrallah and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2009), 87.

at the time of their foundation as immigrants to the satisfaction of the founders (Philo, *Flaccus* 46).

In this apology, Philo sets out to clarify the nature of the ‘ethnicity’ of the Jews in defence of ‘ethnic’ attacks on (Roman) Alexandria. While both the homeland and mother city serve as “dual and gendered parentage constructed through the two ‘genealogical’ elements of Jews’ identities (‘fatherland’ and ‘mother city’), [it, the parentage] signals the relative import of each (fatherland is primary), even as it affirms the significance of both”.⁶⁷⁵ Despite the iconic symbol of the mother city, “claims of ancestry, birth, kinship, and inheritance are appropriately reserved for the myriad ‘fatherlands’ around the world where they have dwelt from time immemorial”.⁶⁷⁶

These discourses on ‘Judaean’ demonstrates how civic language was used to distinguish different aspects of their *ἔθνος*. See further, for example, Strabo (16.2.34-38). Even Philo (e.g., *Mos.* 1.7, 34; *Dec.* 97; *Spec.* 2.163, 166) and Josephus (*War* 2.454, 463; *Apion* 2.237) adopted this tone (pp. 490–3). One issue that Mason might not have considered, however, is that religion or spirituality is never far from the articulation of these ethnic cognates when employed by biblical authors – whether Paul’s use of *Ἰουδαϊσμός* in Gal. 1:13, 14; or his use of *Ἰουδαῖζω* in Gal. 2:14; or by the Evangelists’ prodigious use of *Ἰουδαῖος* in the Gospels, especially Luke. In fact, Acts far outstrip the others in using *Ἰουδαῖος* – 81 times. Luke’s usage, no doubt, has something to do with the theological

⁶⁷⁵ Baker, “From Every Nation under Heaven”, 87.

⁶⁷⁶ Baker, “From Every Nation under Heaven”, 87. The gendered juxtaposition of *πατρίς* (fatherland) and *μητρόπολις* (mother city) evinces the patriarchy and patrilocal culture of Afroasiatic, where there is “weight, compulsion, and demonad for fidelity to ideals and matters associated with ‘fathers’ than to those associated with ‘mothers’”, (p. 87, n. 20).

nature of his biblical texts – that of conjoining ἔθνη and ὁ λαός into Jesus, the hope of Israel (τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῦ Ἰσραήλ, Acts 28:20).⁶⁷⁷

Consequently, and for our purposes, the different ways in which these ethnic terms – Ἰουδαῖοι (and its cognates), ὁ λαός, τὸ ἔθνος and τὰ ἔθνη – are iterated by Luke suggests that they might best be conceptualised as floating, composite signifiers. This is because when viewed in terms of their agency, their politics of meaning only seem to make complete sense when ethnicity is twinned with religion. By religion I do not only mean cultic activity *per se*, but the notion of belonging to systems of belief in the transcendental. Therefore, given their distribution across the diaspora, which is alluded to in Acts 2:5-11, Ἰουδαῖοι might be best construed as a multi-ethnic people who often, in the words of Cynthia Baker, “embody multiple (often dual) lineages of birth, land, history, and culture”.⁶⁷⁸

The slipperiness of the cognates of Ἰουδαῖοι and the semantic range of ἔθνη and ὁ λαός have respectively drifted in the direction of homogeneity in their own domains to the extent that their slippage has amounted to notions of an autochthonous ‘race’ across the board. Many biblical scholars miss these slippages, largely because of their Cartesian reading of Jewish ethnoracial particularism.⁶⁷⁹ While this may in part be due to some unintentional and

⁶⁷⁷ In Acts 28:17, Paul refers to the Jews of Jerusalem as λαός (although I had done nothing contrary against [our] people – οὐδὲν ἐναντίον ποιήσας τῷ λαῷ). Yet, in 28.19 he refers to them as ἔθνος (even though I had no charge to lodge against my people – οὐχ ὡς τοῦ ἔθνους μου ἔχων τι κατηγορεῖν). ESB, NRSV, NASB, KJV and RSV translate it as ‘nation’. NIV and LEB translate it as ‘my own people’, giving the article the force of the personal pronoun, likely because of how ἔθνος is understood by the translators. However, Laos god’s people, ethnos my religious people

⁶⁷⁸ Cynthia M. Baker, “From Every Nation under Heaven”: Jewish Ethnicities in the Greco-Roman World’, in *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings: Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christianity*, ed. Laura Nasrallah and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2009), 81.

⁶⁷⁹ When the Cartesian episteme is seen as a constitutive of whiteness, then parallel arguments may be made of whiteness. Although not specifying whiteness in terms of the Cartesian episteme, it could be argued that the analytic through which David Horrell adeptly identifies Christian volunteerism as privileged over Jewish particularism is the positivistic metaphysics of the Cartesian gaze as a constitutive of whiteness. See David

unwitting desire to privilege Christian voluntarism (and openness, and thereby superiority) over Jewish particularism,⁶⁸⁰ their gaze succeeds in fixating the ethnoreligious identity of the Jew as monocultural and particular, negating any ethnoracial diversity. The ethnoreligious mapping of Acts 2:5-11 is popularly manipulated in this way. Baker helpfully exposes this myopic gaze. On discussing Acts 2:5ff, she unmasks the text critical approach of Bruce Metzger,⁶⁸¹ C. K. Barrett⁶⁸² and Gary Gilbert⁶⁸³ in the use of the phrase, “ἀπὸ παντὸς ἔθνους τῶν ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανόν [from every nation under heaven]”, and how it throws them into disarray. Their ethnic reasoning masks a deeper prejudice.⁶⁸⁴

Some Judaeans – those in and around the region of Judaea – were prejudicial against other Jews in the diaspora. For example, according to Josephus, Herod the Great, who was of Idumaeans descent, was accused by Antigonus the Hasmonean of not having legitimate rights to the throne because he was a half-Jew (ἡμιουδαῖος), and therefore did not have the right ethnic pedigree.⁶⁸⁵ His

G. Horrell, ‘Paul, Inclusion and Whiteness: Particularizing Interpretation’, *JSNT* 40.2 (2017): 123–147.

⁶⁸⁰ See the debate between David Horrell and Philip Esler (and Steve Mason), where Horrell argues against their view of Christian voluntarism – a view that may amount to supersessionism. Steve Mason and Philip F. Esler, ‘Judaeans and Christ-Follower Identities: Grounds for a Distinction’, *NTS* 63.4 (October 2017): 493–515; David G. Horrell, ‘Models and Methods in Social-Scientific Interpretation: A Response To Philip Esler’, *JSNT* 22.78 (1 October 2000): 83–105; David G. Horrell, ‘Judaeans Ethnicity and Christ-Following Voluntarism? A Reply to Steve Mason and Philip Esler’, *New Testament Studies*, 65.1 (2019): 1–20.

⁶⁸¹ Bruce M. Metzger, ‘Ancient Astrological Geography and Acts 2:9-11’, in *Apostolic History and the Gospel: Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce*, ed. W. Ward Gasque and Ralph P. Martin (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 123–33; See also Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 290, where he regards the Ἰουδαῖοι of Acts 2:5 as a monolithic ἔθνος, which could not be identified with other ἔθνη across the Afroasiatic region.

⁶⁸² Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles*, 1994, 1:118–19, where the Ἰουδαῖοι in Acts 2:5 could only reside ‘among’ the other ‘nations’ of the Afroasiatic region and not actually belong to them. This interpretation buys into the “Jews as isolationists” discourse.

⁶⁸³ Gary Gilbert, ‘The List of Nations in Acts 2: Roman Propaganda and the Lukan Response’, *JBL* 121.3 (2002): 505 n. 34, where Gilbert appeals to text-critical argumentation to either censure or problematise the use of Ἰουδαῖοι in Acts 2:5. Ἰουδαῖοι does not appear in \aleph and vg^{mss} but in all other ancient MSS.

⁶⁸⁴ Baker, “From Every Nation under Heaven”, 93–5. “All apparent incoherence, contradictions, and problems vanish, however, with the simple recognition that Luke, like Philo and other writers of Greco-Roman antiquity, recognized a world of ethnoracial diversity among the Jews of their era” (p.95).

⁶⁸⁵ *Ant.* 14.403. Earlier in 13:257-258, Josephus explains how the Idumaeans became Jews at the hand of John

argument was that Herod's father – this was the pre-Rabbinic (pre-70) patrilineal era of determining the ethnicity of a child⁶⁸⁶ – was a half-Jew. Given this prejudice that Judaeans had for outsiders, it is quite possible that Jerusalem-centred Jews might have regarded the Ethiopian eunuch as a half-Jew or because of this not a Jew at all. Then, they would have forcibly gotten Luke's perspective that the Ethiopian eunuch was a Jew, which would have disrupted their prejudice. It would have disturbed their ethnoreligious sensibilities.

New Testament commentators tend to consider the diasporic Jews of Acts 2 (the table of nations) in attendance of Peter's sermon either Jews, as Jewish sympathisers, proselytes, or Godfearers. However, this is generally benchmarked against the rabbinic optic. In other words, Jewishness is ratified, not only benchmarked, with relation to the characteristics of rabbinic Judaism. Is it possible that pre-Rabbinic, Hebrew, diasporic Jews were also present (or another category of Jews, for that matter)? I am referring to (possible) diasporic Jews who considered themselves as not being part of the Rabbinic Jewish tradition that emerged during late Second Temple Judaism.

Hyrkanus (c. 112 BCE). In studying this text, Doron Mendels and Martin Goodman argue that the Idumaeans were forcibly converted to Judaism. See Doron Mendels, *The Land of Israel as a Political Concept in Hasmonean Literature: Recourse to History in Second Century B.C. Claims to the Holy Land* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 57–81; Goodman, *Mission and Conversion*, 74–7. Cf. George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 93. On the other hand, Aryeh Kasher and Shaye Cohen, following Strabo's commentary (16.2.34), argue that they voluntarily accepted Jewish conversion. See Aryeh Kasher, *Jews, Idumaeans, and Ancient Arabs: Relations of the Jews in Eretz-Israel with the Nations of the Frontier and the Desert During the Hellenistic and Roman Era (332 BCE-70 CE)* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988), 46–77; Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 116–7.

⁶⁸⁶ The patrilineal principle (pre-70) predated the matrilineal principle, which was introduced by post-70 rabbinic Judaism, first attested in the Mishnah, and thought to be possibly, though indeterminately, tied *inter alia* to one or a combination of the following: Roman tax laws, Roman inheritance laws, sex ratio where after a major war there was an imbalance in the sexes – not enough men to go around – hence in marrying Jewish converts the posterity of the nation can only be secured through the mother; and the lack of responsibility for children fathered with slave women. See Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 263–340.

Therefore, ancient Jewish identity has been highly complex, malleable and contingent, not least because its ethnography represents a broad and variegated Jewish tapestry. In which case, as is seen from the questions raised by Gary Knoppers and Kenneth Ristau, historical developments have not followed a linear, straightforward course:

Is Judean, for instance, an ethnic, territorial, religious, national, or international designation? What is the relationship between Israel and its land? What is Israel? Might Israel be the patriarch Jacob, the ancestor of a people, a composite of twelve or more tribes, the northern tribes, a united kingdom, a northern state, Judah (a southern state), the children of the exile, a transnational and transtemporal entity, or a group of laity (as opposed to priests, Levites, gatekeepers, and musicians)? What are the markers of Judean identity—a tie to the land (even if one does not necessarily live there), an ancestral link to the patriarch Judah, a prior link to the ancestor Israel/ Jacob, centralization of worship in Jerusalem, political administration by the Davidic family, allegiance to the Torah, shared social memory, the experience of exile, common religious practices, or some combination of the above?⁶⁸⁷

While we are not attempting to answer all the above questions, we can acknowledge that the historical shifts reflected in the questions are contingent on the political happenings of the time. Shifts in group identity such as ethnicity are linked to shifts in power. This section of the chapter will therefore focus on the shifts that underlay the ethnoreligious identity of the first century.

3.5.1.4.1 *The Politics of Jewishness: Jewish or Hebrew Subjectivity?*

The challenge with ascertaining constructions of Jewish identity in the first century is, as alluded to above, that it is equivocated by the accretion of the modern discourses of nationhood, peoplehood and an ethnicity tied to

⁶⁸⁷ 'Introduction', in *Community Identity in Judean Historiography: Biblical and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. by Gary N. Knoppers and Kenneth A. Ristau (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 2–3.

phenotype.⁶⁸⁸ These do not adequately take into account the number of power shifts, in terms of invasions and dispersions, that Israel (and Judaea) underwent over centuries. Neither do they account for how these political shifts undergirded developments in the constructions of ethnicity, never mind ethnoreligion, contributing to changes in the nomenclature of identity markers from Hebrew, to Israelite (Judaean) and to (the postexilic identity of) Jews. Instead, as will be seen, modern constructions of religion, land, nation and scripture are sometimes superimposed upon ancient readings of Ἰουδαῖοι (and its cognates), ὁ λαός, τὸ ἔθνος and τὰ ἔθνη.

The appellative ‘Jew/Jews’ (יהודי/ים / יהודים) is therefore complex. It originated as a post-exilic term designated to reconstruct an ethnoreligious, national(istic) past – nationalistic as a notion invented from nationalism. It first appeared as an adjective in the biblical texts of Zechariah 8:23, referring to a ‘Jewish man’ in an oracle, and in Esther 2:5, referring to Mordecai, the advisor to King Ahasuerus and kinsman of Queen Esther. Yet, well before the first century, as Shaye Cohen convincingly argues, Graeco-Gentiles were allowed to be converted to Judaism as a result of the earlier Hasmonean conquest. In fact, he points out that “not a single ancient author says that Jews are distinctive because of their looks, clothing, speech, names, or occupations”.⁶⁸⁹ In effect, there would have been Jews

⁶⁸⁸ Shelly Tenenbaum and Lynn Davidman, ‘It’s in my Genes: Biological Discourse and Essentialist Views of Identity among Contemporary American Jews’, *Sociological Quarterly* 48:3 (1 June 2007): 435–50; Raphael Falk, *Zionism and the Biology of Jews* (NY: Springer, 2017); Valeriy Chervyakov, Zvi Gitelman, and Vladimir Shapiro, ‘Religion and Ethnicity: Judaism in the Ethnic Consciousness of Contemporary Russian Jews’, *ERS* 20.2 (1 April 1997): 280–305; Roberta Rosenthal Kwall, *The Myth of the Cultural Jew: Culture and Law in Jewish Tradition* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Lynn Davidman, ‘The New Voluntarism and the Case of Unsynagogued Jews’, in *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives*, ed. by Nancy T. Ammerman (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2007), 61–2.

⁶⁸⁹ Shaye J. D. Cohen, “Those Who Say They Are Jews and Are Not”: How Do You Know a Jew in Antiquity When You See One?, in *Diasporas in Antiquity*, ed. by Shaye J. D. Cohen and Ernest S. Frerichs, Brown Judaic Studies (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 3.

who were more attached to the epistemologically Hebrew roots and others more affected by the epistemology of Graeco-Roman society. Indeed, the ethnoreligious landscape of the first century was amorphous. And, in light of our earlier discussion, it is more plausible to conclude that a lineage of Hebrew subjectivity could well have stood outside a rabbinic lineage as well as within it. This Hebrew genealogy would have morphed through different iterations even as it predated rabbinic Judaism, especially in terms of its didactic epistemology, as is enshrined later in the Talmud.⁶⁹⁰

The point being made here is, that theoretically, there is a plausible possibility of the Ethiopian eunuch being a Jew of a nonrabbinic strain, possibly linked to an independent Hebrew lineage that is unaffected by rabbinic Judaism.

3.5.1.4.2 Convivial Religiosity and Land

There was no such thing as ‘religion’, as we understand it, back in antiquity.⁶⁹¹ Religious activity was configured along ethnic lines.⁶⁹² Paula Fredriksen in addition posits that everyone believed that gods were everywhere, that the world was “full of Gods”.⁶⁹³ Therefore, as noted, when discussing the notion of ethnoreligious identity in our Introduction, we need to conceive of religion differently. In effect, there are three general ways to think of the Jewish

⁶⁹⁰ For texts on the influence of Graeco-Roman rhetoric on rabbinic Judaism, see Richard Hidary, *Rabbis and Classical Rhetoric: Sophistic Education and Oratory in the Talmud and Midrash* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Maren Niehoff, *Homer and the Bible in the Eyes of Ancient Interpreters* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); J. Gieger, ‘Plutarch, Dionysus and the God of the Jews Revisited (An Exercise in Quellenforschung)’, in *Gods, Daimones, Rituals, Myths and History of Religions in Plutarch’s Works: Studies Devoted to Professor Frederick E. Brenk*, ed. by L. Van der Stockt, The International Plutarch Society (Logan: Utah, 2010), 211–19; Amram Tropper, ‘Banning Greek: A Rabbinic History’, *JSJ* 49:1 (2018): 101–141.

⁶⁹¹ ‘Religion’ today is thought of as ‘organised religion’.

⁶⁹² Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, 6–15.

⁶⁹³ Paula Fredriksen, ‘Paul, Practical Pluralism, and the Invention of Religious Persecution in Roman Antiquity’, in *Understanding Religious Pluralism: Perspectives from Religious Studies and Theology*, ed. by Peter C. Phan and Jonathan Ray (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014), 88.

landscape: one, in the Hebrew worldview ethnicity and religion are not separable; two, ethnicity defines religion and religion defines ethnicity; and three, the habitat of ethnoreligion is nation-less and stateless, though bound to land. This notion of ethnoreligion is not unique to the Jews. The whole world was characterised in this way. People believed in gods, shared their gods with others and generally respected other people's gods. It was a multi-religious world where everyone revered the spirit world, as was their "ancestral custom".⁶⁹⁴ In light of this, I hesitate to use the word, 'pagan' or 'heathen', since they popularly connote an irreligious, faithless community. I would rather use an ethnically tied word like 'Graeco-Roman religions', while acknowledging that 'religion' is problematic. 'Pagans' believed in gods. Hence, their religious practice was ethnically defined. In this guise, it was one tied to ethnicity and land.

It is outside the remit of this dissertation to examine the way the notion of land has been deployed in biblical studies, never mind Acts. However, a quick survey of modern texts reveals that a considerable amount of texts tends to view land through the reductionist, Cartesian, modernistic lens of property and surveillance.⁶⁹⁵ Matthew Sleeman's monograph, *Geography and the Ascension Narrative in Acts*, remains the definitive text on geography and land in Acts.⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹⁴ There is a significant quote in *Contra Celsum* by the second century Christian apologist, "In [the Roman] empire, different nations have different customs, and no one is hindered by law or fear of punishment from following his ancestral customs, no matter how ridiculous these may be" (*Legatio*, 1).

⁶⁹⁵ James C. VanderKam, 'Putting Them in Their Place: Geography as an Evaluative Tool', in *Pursuing the Text: Studies in Honor of Ben Zion Wacholder on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. John C. Reeves and John Kampen (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2009), 46–69; Robert M. Grant, 'Early Christian Geography', *VC* 46.2 (1992): 105–11; David M. Gunn and Paula McNutt, eds., *'Imagining' Biblical Worlds: Studies in Spatial, Social and Historical Constructs in Honour of James W. Flanagan* (London; New York: Continuum, 2002); Jon L. Berquist, 'Critical Spatiality and the Construction of the Ancient World', in *'Imagining' Biblical Worlds: Studies in Spatial, Social and Historical Constructs in Honour of James W. Flanagan*, ed. David M. Gunn and Paula McNutt (London; New York: Continuum, 2002), 14–29; Scott, 'Geographical Perspectives'; Reinhard Henkel, 'Geography of Religion', ed. by Erwin Fahlbusch and others, trans. by Geoffrey William Bromiley, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI; Leiden: Eerdmans; Brill, 1999).

⁶⁹⁶ Matthew Sleeman, *Geography and the Ascension Narrative in Acts*, SNTSMS 146 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

He acknowledges the value of reading people and land together,⁶⁹⁷ as he embarks on a reading that is ‘spatial’: “This reading is ‘spatial’, in that it explores how space is organised and structured within Acts.”⁶⁹⁸ However, when examining the passages, which he deems fall under this rubric, he does so in terms of the theology of the spaces and places in light of relationships with the respective actors (including heavenly actors) deployed by Acts.⁶⁹⁹ This would be exemplary if he were to take into consideration the ancients’ view of people and land, especially from the perspectives of ancient Afroasiatic Judaism, which was quite confluent with the epistemological cosmogony of the Hebrew bible. Moreover, Sleeman does not consider the story of the Ethiopian eunuch as geography. He, like so many others of the Anglophone academy, passes over it, the effect of which is to commit erasure. But the Ethiopian eunuch’s story is replete with different kinds of space, occupation of space and architecture of space, not least determined by the plot-motif of ‘the Way’ (ἡ ὁδός) – Acts 8:26, 36, 39 – not to mention the figure of the desert place (ἡ ἔρημος, 8:26).

What is difficult to document is the relationship of ancient Afroasiatics to the land. Much of the literature centres on the entitlement of (ancient and modern) Israel to the Holy Land.⁷⁰⁰ However, one significant text by Patrick Schreiner, ‘Space, Place and Biblical Studies: A Survey of Recent Research in Light of

⁶⁹⁷ Sleeman, *Geography in Acts*, 53.

⁶⁹⁸ Sleeman, *Geography in Acts*, 63.

⁶⁹⁹ Sleeman heuristically draws on the geography theorist, Ed Soja, to form his three-part schema to exegete spatial references in Acts: firstspace, which views experience empirically; secondspace, which views perception theoretically; and thirdspace, which views imagination creatively” (p. 43).

⁷⁰⁰ Eliezer Schweid, *The Land of Israel: National Home Or Land of Destiny* (London; Toronto: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1985); Paul Scham, *Competing Israeli and Palestinian Narratives* (London; New York: Routledge Handbooks Online, 2012); Richard C. Lux, ‘The Land of Israel (Eretz Yisra’el) in Jewish and Christian Understanding’, *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 3.1 (21 April 2011); Dan Rickett, ‘Rethinking the Place and Purpose of Genesis 13’, *JSOT* 36.1 (1 September 2011), 31–53; *The Holy Land in History and Thought: Papers Submitted to the International Conference on the Relations Between the Holy Land and the World Outside It, Johannesburg, 1986*, ed. by Moše Šārôn (Leiden: Brill, 1988).

Developing Trends', as the title suggests, critically surveys the notable texts in recent years on critical spatiality, ranging from "the physical world in which people exist, the ideological underpinnings of understanding places, [to] the lived practices of people within those places that sometimes challenge and sometimes reaffirm the expected uses of such places."⁷⁰¹ This is a valuable piece of work. It may be critiqued for paying little attention in its critique on the lack of study given to the actual ontological relationship ancient people had with their land. However, the greatest challenge with Schreiner's assessment is his centring of European 'etic' strategies and theories that seek to understand critically Afroasiatic spaces. Is his gaze somewhat a Cartesian gaze, a gaze that silences significant stories, through erasure? This is the effect of not being able to see other 'constitutive' histories. In which case, a convivial optic of 'connected histories' might help.

Jennings has already pointed out the relationship between the capitalistic logic of whiteness and land.⁷⁰² If we employ the notion of 'connected histories', we may further look at those neighbouring countries, especially the ones that shared mutual journeys, such as trade and pilgrimage, as not only to inform a picture of what might have been, but structure or reconstitute our conceptuality in terms of

⁷⁰¹ Patrick Schreiner, 'Space, Place and Biblical Studies: A Survey of Recent Research in Light of Developing Trends', *Currents in Biblical Research* 14.3 (1 June 2016): 340–371 (p.340).

⁷⁰² In addition to the capitalistic logic, a second instrument of divorce between land and people is rooted in distorted theologies of creation and incarnation. Jennings, already noted for making the point of separation earlier, sees the commodification and consumption of land as private property as wrenching created beings from their unity with created land and reducing "theological anthropology to commodified bodies" – Willie James Jennings, "He Became Truly Human": Incarnation, Emancipation, and Authentic Humanity', *Modern Theology* 12.2 (1 April 1996): 246. This position is further amplified in his monograph, Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*. A third instrument of divorce, and in many ways a combination and culmination of the previous two, is whiteness. Jennings does much to connect the capitalist logic and commodification of land with the episteme of whiteness at the onset of the 'doctrine of discovery'. For a comprehensive analysis of this, see Andrew T. Draper, *A Theology of Race and Place: Liberation and Reconciliation in the Works of Jennings and Carter* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2016). As intimated in chapter 1, whiteness is constituted by the aforementioned capitalist logic and distorted theology. However, its reach as an epistemic optic is far more brutal and devastating because it is operational as a racialising discourse.

what could be. Allen M. Howard and Richard Matthew Shain's edited volume, *The Spatial Factor in African History* is a case in point.⁷⁰³

Howard and Shain bring out the following points of the attitudes and relationships that Africans – from that vast continent – share with the land. While the volume looks at modern modes of praxis, I have concentrated more on the essays that speak to the ancient modes of praxis with space between 1,500 to 100 years ago, notwithstanding the violent interruptions of colonial rule.⁷⁰⁴ I summarise: by land is meant, not ownership or possession in the modernistic-commodification sense of the word, but in terms of a participative relationship with the soil, the flora and fauna, the environ and ecosystem, the animals and livestock, the climate and water. Not as individuals, but as a collective, as people. Notions of land as property is a Euromodern concept. Ancient people (even of the period on which we are focussing) saw themselves, in the main, as belonging to the land; not the land belonging to them. For them, the land had agency.⁷⁰⁵ The convivial religiosity discussed above, ties people to land, where they derive meaning from symbols and images. Land is not property nor propertied. Land is facilitator, enabler, sustainer. Land is not circumscribed, not bordered. Land is open, unbounded. Land facilitates travel and abode. It facilitates crossings. And where there are systemic borders, the land remains and is accommodative to transgressive crossings.

This sometime spiritual picture could be criticised for romanticising and idealising African attitudes and behaviour towards the land. Of course, there are records of stealing and exploitation of the land. But the point of rendering the

⁷⁰³ *The Spatial Factor in African History: The Relationship of the Social, Material, and Perceptual*, ed. by Allen M. Howard and Richard Matthew Shain (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

⁷⁰⁴ Howard and Shain, *The Spatial Factor in African History*, 29, 64–77, 153–171, .

⁷⁰⁵ Howard and Shain, *The Spatial Factor in African History*, 157: “The land is a “text” of history and walking over it with elders is an act of “reading” the past.”

documentary evidence in this way is to demonstrate how alien this approach and relationship to land is to a Cartesian gaze defined by a capitalist, consumerist logic. If this picture was read into the Sleeman's evaluation of the texts in Acts, more could be extracted in terms of the organic affiliation biblical characters had with the land and with their God. We will develop this thought in chapter 4.

Already it can be seen that the question of what constitutes a Jewish identity is a vexed question. Even when analytically framed within an ethnoreligious taxonomy, the above discussion suggests that the Jewishness asked of the Ethiopian eunuch is neither an ethnicity question nor a religion one. It is both ethnicity and religion, but one devoid of biology and inscribed by social constructions and land.

The question is further compounded, however, because if anything the Ethiopian eunuch is from the diaspora. Would all Afroasiatic Jews in the first century, inclusive of diasporic Jews, be considered as constituting the same *ἔθνος* and religion? The answer would be a tentative 'yes' if their ethnoreligion is construed not in terms of being scientifically fixed, but in terms of a composite, floating entity and if the concept of nationhood was not presupposed. Composite, because of its broad and shifting constitutive base, and a floating signifier because it is seen to be different in different places and eras, because as a discursive category it seeks to signify meaning in terms of the relationship of those differences.⁷⁰⁶ Yet for this to work the classic idea of nation needs to be expunged.

3.5.1.4.3 Nationhood or Peoplehood?

Today, the question of nationhood is closely associated with ethnoreligious identity and agency, to the extent that one can speak of an ethnoreligious

⁷⁰⁶ For a full discussion, see Stuart Hall, *Race: A Floating Signifier*.

national identity – e.g., Ireland, Pakistan, and Israel. Yet nationhood shaped by the nation state is entirely a modern invention, derived from European and colonial expansionism.⁷⁰⁷ There was no such thing as nation states in antiquity. There were groups (‘nations’) of people, which are best described not in terms of nationhood, but peoplehood, although the peoplehood of the Jews became institutionalised in rabbinic writings.⁷⁰⁸ Peoplehood, therefore, accounts for diasporic relations.⁷⁰⁹ However, it is difficult to dissociate peoplehood from ethnicity.⁷¹⁰

The inclusivity of the diasporic Jews – though this should never be romanticised – is best conceptualised by eliminating the modern concept of nation from the equation. The term ‘nation’ connotes the myth of cohesiveness and strategic collectivism within a bordered region.⁷¹¹ Peoplehood, however, as connoted by ὁ λαός and τὰ ἔθνη in our discussion above, is inclusive of ‘joining’, even of mass conversion as found in Acts: e.g., Jews – 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1,7; 9:42; 12:24; 13:43; 14:1; 17:10ff; 21:20.

While it is nigh impossible to make a probative case for the historical ethnoreligious identity of the Ethiopian eunuch, there is plausible circumstantial evidence for theoretically accounting for an Ethiopian Jew (nonrabbinic/Hebrew) in the first century. This tradition of not essentialising Jews is what probably became the received wisdom of a later comment of a haggadic homily, Song of Songs Rabbah on the Songs of Songs 6:11 – “An Israelite cannot appear in any

⁷⁰⁷ Scott Greer, *The Concept of Community: Readings with Interpretations* (London: Routledge, 2017), 127.

⁷⁰⁸ Dereck Daschke, *City of Ruins: Mourning the Destruction of Jerusalem Through Jewish Apocalypse* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 187.

⁷⁰⁹ Fishman, *Varieties of Jewishness*, 44–6.

⁷¹⁰ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 7, 53–62; David Goodblatt, *Elements of Ancient Jewish Nationalism* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1–27.

⁷¹¹ For an example of the retention of terms like ‘nationality’ and ‘nationalism’, see Goodblatt, 1–27.

place and claim that he is not a Jew. Why? Because he is recognizable” (p. 35b ed. Vilna). Cohen argues that the recognisability was not necessarily physical.⁷¹²

3.5.1.4.4 Sacral Scripture and Temple

What makes the ethnoreligious tapestry of ancient Judaism even more substantive is its common “sacral scripture”, which by the time of the rabbinic era became, to borrow John Armstrong’s phrase, “a prime boundary-maintaining symbol”.⁷¹³ By sacral is meant a way of reading sacred scripture as a spiritual event. It is not the same as ‘sacred’ nor does it refer to the Hebrew scriptures as a canonical whole, since during the (Afroasiatic) Second Temple period there is evidence of quite a diverse and fluid regard for the Torah (and its composition) as scripture throughout the diaspora.⁷¹⁴ The canon was not reified. This is demonstrated in the early uneven treatment of the Torah evidenced in part by Ezra’s seemingly surprise discovery of the Torah during the Persian period, the absence of Torah domination in communities like those of third to second century Elephantine, Egypt, the unilateral tradition of Wisdom literature, and the unique tradition of the Enochic tradition.⁷¹⁵ In which case, the cultic practices of the Jewish diaspora were likewise differentiated across regions as those locales had already set roots and become in Boyarin’s words, “the cultural situation of a collective that is located in its own local culture”, even though they might have shared aspects of cultures of “another collective elsewhere”.⁷¹⁶ In any case, given

⁷¹² Cohen suggests an alternative ending: “Because he is recognised, שְׁהוּא נִכָּר”. See Cohen, “Those Who Say They Are Jews and Are Not”, 39. See also Salo W. Baron, ‘Problems of Jewish Identity from an Historical Perspective: A Survey’, *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 46/47 (1979): 52, n. 23.

⁷¹³ John Alexander Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 201–2.

⁷¹⁴ John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 20–3.

⁷¹⁵ John J. Collins, *Scriptures and Sectarianism: Essays on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 20–1.

⁷¹⁶ Daniel Boyarin, *A Traveling Homeland: The Babylonian Talmud as Diaspora* (Philadelphia, PN: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 107.

the pronounced culture of orality,⁷¹⁷ the fluidity of texts and evolving nature of the productions of texts,⁷¹⁸ it is impossible to speak of a stabilised, fixed ‘sacred scripture’ at this time.

However, aided and abetted by empire, the deferential force of the Torah⁷¹⁹ and temple⁷²⁰ seemed to have gathered apace in this post-Maccabean era, the era likely formative to rabbinic Judaism. This ensued across the diaspora, providing mounted common kinship around observances such as circumcision, the Sabbath, and kosher regulations⁷²¹ – observances, which were consolidated for perpetuity by the later (and by later is meant centuries later) centralisation of the Talmud for rabbinic Judaism. Nevertheless, as alluded to above, with respect to the Jewish communities in Egypt, the different communities around the psalms and wisdom literature, and those around the Enochic tradition (not to mention the Jubilees), nonrabbinic Judaism had as much at stake in forming differentiated traditions around the Torah.

It is Seth Schwartz who makes the point about imperial support. When there was Jewish accommodation to Roman rule, especially during the better part of the first century, Rome entertained a reciprocal accommodation for Jewish devotion to the national religious symbols. In fact, there was “imperial support for the central national institutions of the Jews, the Jerusalem temple and the

⁷¹⁷ William M. Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁷¹⁸ Eva Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁷¹⁹ Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*, 56–63, 291.

⁷²⁰ Francis Schmidt, *How the Temple Thinks: Identity and Social Cohesion in Ancient Judaism* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 127–29. The magnetism of the Temple was probably reinforced with the Maccabean revolt at 164 BCE, given the historic triumph of the Maccabees over Antiochus Epiphanes IV (1 Macc. 4).

⁷²¹ Robert Doran, “The Persecution of Judeans by Antiochus Epiphanes IV: The Significance of “Ancestral Laws””, in *The ‘Other’ in Second Temple Judaism: Essays in Honor of John J. Collins*, ed. Daniel C. Harlow et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 432.

[Torah]”.⁷²² This relationship between imperial generosity and Jewish accommodation is traceable throughout the (Afroasiatic) Second Temple period.⁷²³ The boost in relative autonomy encouraged conviviality between the different Jewish groups – even across the diaspora, though uneven and chequered – as they rallied around the symbols, which came to define their dispersed but corporate identity: the temple, through pilgrimage, and the Torah through the synagogues and worship.

Significantly, this centring and performative role of sacral scripture did not only provide pedagogical orientation but psychagogical too.⁷²⁴ Pedagogy focuses on transmitting information to another, where the transmitter is the master of the transmission. Psychagogy is the sharing of information to another where the receiver is not only informed with new knowledge, understanding and insight, but is formed by it. In other words, the shared information is efficacious for one’s mode of being to be altered. Sacral scripture and pilgrimage do not merely provide data-information or aesthetic admiration but induces psychagogical bonding and conviviality, in terms of opening up or even demanding a

⁷²² Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*, 14.

⁷²³ Schwartz’s monograph traces the rise and fall of the relationship between the Jews and Rome to its total collapse at the calamitous defeat of the revolts of 66 and 132.

⁷²⁴ Secondary works on ancient psychagogy include Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, trans. Arnold Davidson (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995); Martha Nussbaum, ‘Therapeutic Arguments: Epicurus and Aristotle’, in *The Norms of Nature: Studies in Hellenistic Ethics*, ed. Malcolm Schofield, Reprint (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 31–74; Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*, Rev. ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018); John M. Dillon, ‘The Pleasures and Perils of Soul-Gardening’, in *The Studia Philonica Annual, IX. Wisdom and Logos: Studies in Jewish Thought in Honor of David Winston*, ed. D. T. Runia and G. E. Sterling, Brown Judaic Studies 312 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997), 190–97; Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Early Christian Paraenesis in Context*, ed. James Starr and Troels Engberg-Pedersen, Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift Fuer Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 2004), 47–72 (59–60); Paul R. Kolbet, *Augustine and the Cure of Souls: Revising a Classical Ideal* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010); David Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy: The Coherence of His Theology and Preaching* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Wendy Mayer, ‘Shaping the Sick Soul: Reshaping the Identity of John Chrysostom’, in *Christians Shaping Identity from the Roman Empire to Byzantium: Studies Inspired by Pauline Allen*, ed. by Geoffrey Dunn and Wendy Mayer (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015), 140–66.; Wendy Mayer, ‘The Persistence in Late Antiquity of Medico-Philosophical Psychic Therapy’, *Journal of Late Antiquity* 8.2 (2015): 337–351.

disposition of confessional surrender. This is what Foucault suggests is the major difference between Christianity and ancient Graeco-Roman philosophy towards religion in the practice of pedagogy and psychagogy. In Graeco-Roman philosophy, pedagogy and psychagogy relationships are closely aligned as *paideia* where “the obligations of truth are essentially borne by the master, counsellor [sic.], or guide”. The master holds himself up as the paragon of a changed life. However, in Christian psychagogy, “the truth does not come from the person who guides the soul but is given in another mode (Revelation, Text, Book, etcetera)”.⁷²⁵ This induces confession and surrender in the student to the teleological aspiration of an eschatological hope and who, in the process, takes on the burden of a changed life. (This could be said of the Ethiopian eunuch in terms of confession in Acts 8: 37 and obligation, 8:39.)

Michal Beth Dinkler demonstrates the literary utility of psychagogy by using as her case study the Ethiopian eunuch’s story in Acts 8:26-40.⁷²⁶ In the Graeco-Roman world, the spoken word was pedagogically and psychagogically efficacious for soul formation in terms of “the leading of the soul”.⁷²⁷ This is seen in the Lukan rhetorical strategy to not only inculcate spiritual formation in the readers of Acts but hermeneutical skills too. Luke wishes to promote a way of reading that requires narrative reflexivity as a literary component of rhetorical narratology. For Dinkler, Luke’s point is that since “reading is not synonymous with understanding, one ought to have an authoritative interpretive guide, and

⁷²⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981-1982*, ed. by Frédéric Gros, trans. by Graham Burchell (NY; Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 408.

⁷²⁶ Michal Beth Dinkler, ‘Interpreting Pedagogical Acts: Acts 8.26–40 and Narrative Reflexivity as Pedagogy’, *NTS* 63.3 (2017): 411–427.

⁷²⁷ See among many examples, discussions in Epictetus, Discourse 3.21.18-24; Philodemus, *De libertate dicendi*; Philo, *De congressu eruditionis gratia*; *De Iosepho*; Plutarch, *Mor.* 14e-74e; Dio Chrysostom 77-78; the Cynic Epistles; Cicero, *Tusc.* 4; Seneca, *Ep.* 6, 16, 32, 34, 52, 64, 112, 120; later, Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 43.2.

embrace a hermeneutic of hospitality towards the received narrative”.⁷²⁸ In which case, Philip is the interpretative guide, while the Ethiopian eunuch demonstrates hospitable invitation to Philip and hospitable acceptance of Philip’s authoritative interpretation.

When the context of pilgrimage, the case of which will be made in the next chapter, and sacral scripture is taken into account, the psychagogical impression is moreover pronounced, not merely for Luke’s readers, however, but possibly for the actors themselves, especially the eunuch and his entourage, with Philip as the psychagogue, the spiritual guide.⁷²⁹ The enunciation of the word as sacral practice would then be understood to have power to form lives. This would have had a psychagogical bearing on those conjoined in the sacral act of pilgrimage and (communal) reading. However, psychagogy was not only a Graeco-Roman literary device, it was a phenomenon constitutive of Judaism, whether Hellenistic⁷³⁰ or Hebrew Judaism. These themes will be followed up in the next chapter when we scrutinise the text more closely. Suffice it to say, this also is phenomenologically the predisposition of the Hebrew experience also.

3.6 Summary

This chapter has set the theoretical path of reconstruction in reply to the whiteness trope that governed the Cartesian reception of the Ethiopian eunuch by the early Church Fathers. To do this, it aimed to set the background for re-

⁷²⁸ Dinkler, ‘Interpreting Pedagogical Acts’, 411.

⁷²⁹ For a discussion on the psychagogue as a spiritual guide, see Ilsetraut Hadot, ‘The Spiritual Guide’, in *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman*, ed. by Arthur Hilary Armstrong, World Spirituality (London: Alban Books, 1989), 436–59.

⁷³⁰ Clarence E. Glad, *Paul and Philodemus: Adaptability in Epicurean and Early Christian Psychagogy* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); Ivar Vegge, *2 Corinthians, a Letter about Reconciliation: A Psychagogical, Epistolographical, and Rhetorical Analysis* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

thinking the continued conceptuality of the agency/identity of the Ethiopian eunuch in modern Anglophone scholarship. Given the hermeneutical key of ‘critical conviviality’, the ethnoreligious assumptions and presuppositions of the question ‘why can the Ethiopian eunuch not be a Jew?’ was exposed by looking at the disciplinary conventions of biblical studies such as the literary, provenance, historical and sociocultural contexts of Acts. These needed to be reconfigured, given that within the academy these habitually prescribe the epistemological scaffolding for construing the Ethiopian eunuch text in term of the gaze of whiteness.

‘Critical conviviality’ is characterised by the temporal axis of collectivist hospitality and ‘connected histories’ on the one hand, and the spatial axis of liminality and the carnivalesque of belonging on the other. In this way, its performativity serves as the countervailing counterpoint to the performativity of whiteness. It thereby enables us to conceptualise Luke differently. He can be plausibly theorised to be a postcolonial-cosmopolitan theologian from the Hellenised, Jewish diaspora. This colours his composition of Acts, the purpose of which is: that God’s plan of invitation to all peoples – Jews and Gentiles – to join his salvific Kingdom, as worked through the life and ministry of Jesus, continues subversively across systemic borders in the expanding life and work of lagging-behind ἐκκλησία communities, and all inexorably at the behest of the Holy Spirit. This purpose is amply seen against the convivial backdrop of viewing first century Judaism as a heterogeneous peoplehood, inclusive of a nonrabbinic, ‘Hebrew’ lineage.

This paradigm shift will in turn facilitate the work of the next chapter: to elucidate a plausible ‘Hebrew’ agency of the Ethiopian eunuch, in light of the question, ‘Why can the Ethiopian eunuch not be a Jew?’ So, this chapter focused on setting up the stall for chapter 4 by theoretically developing the hermeneutic

of ‘critical conviviality’ as a means for conceptualising Luke as a postcolonial, cosmopolitan theologian who had a broad perspective of what the ethnoreligious landscape of first century Judaism was like. It became clear that notions of peoplehood and ethnicity as refracted through terms like *Ιουδαῖοι* (and its cognates), *ὁ λαός*, *τὸ ἔθνος* (*τὰ ἔθνη*) and *γένος* are not biologically inscribed, but are floating, composite signifiers that are contingent on land, religious life, relationships and collective peoples. Indeed, they are not necessarily beholden to a Graeco-Roman nor a rabbinic ocular benchmark, but when realigned as constitutive of the Afroasiatic region, offer something more in terms of an organic relationship with land that facilitates the crossing of systemic borders.

Having established in chapter 3 that the ethnoreligious landscape of Afroasiatic Judaism and its diaspora are normally refracted for both a Graeco-Roman optic and a Rabbinic Jewish script, the Ethiopian eunuch in light of chapters one and two can be seen to be caught adrift in the Cartesian reclamation of this teleological ideal. In effect, the multicultural and multi-ethnic, and thereby multi-religious tapestry of Afroasiatic Judaism is marginalised. But it is in this hinterland that the ethnoreligious identity of the Ethiopian eunuch is situated. He is consequently marginalised.

Chapter 4

4 PILGIMAGE, REPRESENTATION AND THE AFRICAN JEW

*The idea of whiteness had come to the Ethiopian eunuch, and this movement toward colonial performance turned some of the emotional climate of his blackness into artefact and entertainment. But there was still enough conviviality between his blackness and the artefact to make that artefact beautiful and unbelievably moving.*⁷³¹

–adapted from Amiri Baraka

4.1 Introduction

The above paraphrase is adapted from the original quote of Amiri Baraka, when he was known as LeRoi Jones:

An idea of theater had come to the blues, and this movement toward performance turned some of the emotional climate of the Negro's life into artifact and entertainment. But there was still enough intimacy between the real world and the artifact to make that artifact beautiful and unbelievably moving.⁷³²

Baraka, a rising Civil Rights poet of the Black Arts Movement in the early 1960s of USA, saw the black aesthetic – black expressive culture – as a political act that would rally the consciousness of African Americans to the revolution needed to

⁷³¹ Adapted from: LeRoi Jones, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: William Morrow, 1963), 38.

⁷³² LeRoi Jones, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: William Morrow, 1963), 38.

bring about their emancipation from the oppression of white supremacy. For him, the theatre, itself a tool of white supremacy, had come to commodify the blues as performance for the white gaze. This domination served to contain and constrict the blues as artefact, and thereby black suffering as negligible. Nevertheless, there was still enough dynamism in the existential experience of blackness to render the ‘muted’ artefact “beautiful and unbelievably moving”. My adaption introduces the point of this chapter. It considers, along the same vein, the historical gaze of whiteness to be the constricting force that represses the agency of the Ethiopian eunuch. The consequential artefact is the banalised product of a Graeco-Roman convert who suits a Graeco-Roman facing interpretative optic. However, despite the paucity of historical documentation to say otherwise, there is still enough Afroasiatic conviviality between his blackness and the Eurocentric artefact to render his black Jewish agency discernible, plausible and viably imaginable. This agency is amply seen against the convivial backdrop of viewing first century (Afroasiatic) Judaism as a heterogeneous peoplehood, inclusive of a nonrabbinic, ‘Hebrew’ lineage.⁷³³

In this chapter, Euromodernity’s architectural logics of whiteness will be further exposed in its undergirding of the majority readings of the Ethiopian eunuch. ‘Critical conviviality’ is therefore further invoked as the counterpoint of the hegemonic Cartesian episteme and performativity of whiteness, counteracting its iterations of an individualistic, heteronormative and racialised conceptuality. Otherwise, to paraphrase Hall in light of the Ethiopian eunuch, the Ethiopian eunuch will remain signified and decoded in a negotiated and depressed way,

⁷³³ As noted earlier, by ‘Hebrew’, I am referring to a nonrabbinic Jewishness, since the appellative, ‘Jewish’, is more than likely a post-exilic (i.e., post-Babylonian exilic) term probably designated to reconstruct an ethnoreligious, national(istic) past.

leaving him mute. Even more, to borrow Hall's quote, "Here the 'politics of signification' – the struggle in discourse – is joined".⁷³⁴

This struggle ensures that there are no absolute guarantees with the communication of Luke's message. What Luke intended to communicate is not necessarily what is altogether received. Therefore, even my contested reading of the text cannot be definitively fixed and claimed to be the universal verdict. In fact, Hall goes on to say,

It is possible for a viewer [or reader] perfectly to understand both the literal and the connotative inflection given by a discourse but to decode the message in a globally contrary way. He/she detotalizes the message in the preferred code in order to retotalize the message within some alternative framework of reference.⁷³⁵

In other words, the finiteness of the reader ensures an incomplete and different meaning – in the Derridian *différance* sense of the word. Indeed, there can be no 'proof beyond reasonable doubt'. All this chapter can do is demonstrate that on balance the "alternative framework of reference" – the Hebrew agency of the Ethiopian eunuch – successfully does two things. One, it raises sufficient questions so as to decentre the normative Graeco-Gentile 'ideal type' constructions of the Ethiopian eunuch, which in some quarters have become institutionalised as the true reading; and two, it provides an opportunity for a plausible 'Jewish' conviviality to be imaged, providing a more fruitful paradigm of conceptuality for the book of Acts.

⁷³⁴ Stuart Hall, 'Encoding/Decoding', in *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79*, eds. Stuart Hall *et al* (Birmingham, UK: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1980), 137. The notion of the joining of signification between the signifier and signified is the moment of stabilisation, fixity and centralised, logocentric essentialism. Then, dialecticism, as characterised by Hall's idea of struggle, is dead.

⁷³⁵ Hall, 'Encoding/Decoding', 137.

The modern, secondary literature mainly from the past 150 years will not be canvassed for analysis as in chapter 2, where successive Church Fathers, who commented on the ethnoreligious identity of the Ethiopian eunuch, were systematically examined in terms of the politics of his ethnoreligious identity and agency. Instead, the literature will be refracted for its interpretative worth in light of a convivial, hermeneutical reading of the actual text of Acts itself. We will exegetically ascertain from the textual data two major conceptual tropes and see their explanatory power in elucidating a plausible ‘Hebrew’ agency of the Ethiopian eunuch, in light of Luke’s purpose for writing the story. The conceptual tropes are pilgrimage and representation.⁷³⁶ The emergent ‘Hebrew’ agency will in turn be seen not only to decentre the dominant Eurocentric historicisation of the text or disrupt and resist its Cartesian treatment but clear the way to see convivially the plausibility of a fully-fledged Jewish ethnoreligious identity.

My exegesis begins with a close reading of the text in its articulation of the conceptual tropes of pilgrimage and representation.⁷³⁷ This will guide and sustain the core thesis of the dissertation: that the common conceptuality of the Ethiopian eunuch’s ethnoreligious identity is borne from a Cartesian gaze, which negates the possibility of him being considered as a fully-fledged Jew, and thereby shuts down any literary opportunity of viewing the actual text differently. Using a convivial lens, it is possible to reconstruct a plausible socio-religious profile of this Ethiopian subject from close reading, which could offer his

⁷³⁶ A third conceptual trope could be explored in answer to Acts 1:8b: i.e., missional expansionism across borders. This would help to answer the question of why this story is strategically part of Luke’s programmatic, missional expansionism of Acts 1:8, and Isaianic diasporic reclamation, which places him as a Jew. However, the question of why Luke’s includes this story in the first place and moreover why it is positioned where it is in the storyline of Acts, is outside the purview of this dissertation, although allusions will be made to this.

⁷³⁷ Barbara Herrnstein Smith, ‘What Was “Close Reading”? A Century of Method in Literary Studies’, *Minnesota Review* 87.1 (12 October 2016): 57–75.

ethnoreligious agency as a plausibly fully-fledged Hebrew, even if a distant diasporic ‘kinsman’. Then, given his probable social location as a ‘Hebrew’, nonrabbinic, non-Graeco-Roman Jew of the diaspora and a professional one at that, it will be shown that Luke’s use of the Ethiopian eunuch in his discursive strategy can be made to deconstruct the ethnoreligious sensibilities of different, successive audiences.

Luke is manifestly a master storyteller, who intentionally set out to write a compelling and fairly sequential narrative of the Jesus events that were fulfilled in his time.⁷³⁸ The hermeneutic of ‘critical conviviality’ provides fresh perspectives of the text. As anticipated, there are two major conceptual tropes that emerge from this story: pilgrimage and representation. They are accounted for when considering the question, why cannot the Ethiopian eunuch be a Jew? In other words, why cannot the Ethiopian eunuch be a Jew, especially in light of the propositions that he was on a pilgrimage and that he was a representative of his people? These tropes will be characterised by the hermeneutic of ‘critical conviviality’ in light of its double axial constitutives: i.e., a Hebrew, collectivist epistemology supplemented by Subrahmanyam’s ‘connected histories’ on the temporal axis, and liminality and the carnivalesque of belonging on the spatial axis. These are rehistoricisation operatives. Then the dominant gaze of a Eurocentric conceptuality that restricts and represses the African agency of the Ethiopian eunuch will be disrupted. Moreover, the hermeneutic of conviviality will help with reconstructing a fuller Jewish agency of this African man.

⁷³⁸ See Spencer’s perceptive translation of Luke’s befitting headline of Luke 1:1, “orderly-arranged account [or] sequential *narrative* (διήγησιν) of the events that have been fulfilled among us,” F. Scott Spencer, ‘The Narrative of Luke-Acts’, 121.

4.2 *Diasporic Pilgrimage*

So, why cannot the Ethiopian eunuch be a Jew in light of the proposition that he was on a Jewish pilgrimage? A number of scholars suggest that the Ethiopian eunuch cannot be a Jew because his journey to worship in Jerusalem is a consequence of his religious curiosity.⁷³⁹ Religious curiosity, because in the least he is a Jewish sympathiser. In other words, he is a religious tourist. This denial is due in part to his attributively 'literal' eunuch status, which we will address below, in that eunuchs were putatively legislated against entering the temple (Deut.23:1), notwithstanding their legitimate accessibility to the Court of the Gentiles, if they were Gentiles, of course.⁷⁴⁰ Hence, if his sexuality pre-emptively forbade him to enter the temple, then the most he could expect of himself, it is argued, is to be a Jewish sympathiser such as a Godfearer. In the very least, he could be a religious tourist. However, when viewed through the convivial lens of pilgrimage it becomes increasingly plausible that the Ethiopian eunuch is devoutly on a religious journey. He is on a pilgrimage.⁷⁴¹

The notion of pilgrimage is a contested one. Some scholars, such as Scott Scullion, argue that the term is too loose and contaminated by medieval conceptions of pilgrimage to be anachronistically applied back into Graeco-Roman journey practices.⁷⁴² By problematising the Greek terms for 'sacred' and

⁷³⁹ Michal Beth Dinkler, 'Interpreting Pedagogical Acts', 419; Justo L. González, *Acts: The Gospel of the Spirit* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 115; Gaventa, *Acts*, 143.

⁷⁴⁰ Luke does cite two instances of the contravention of Temple by the trespassing of Gentiles in Acts 21:28 and 24:6.

⁷⁴¹ Several scholars miss the point of pilgrimage altogether. Sometimes this is due to race thinking, as in Dinkler, 'Interpreting Pedagogical Acts', 419. The race thinking in this case is indicated by her headlining of a disclaimer, that he was an Ethiopian eunuch – "a clear indication that this character is not a Jew, but an outsider". The corollary is that he cannot be a Jew because of his race.

⁷⁴² Scott Scullion, "Pilgrimage" and Greek Religion: Sacred and Secular in the Pagan *Polis*, in *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Antiquity: Seeing the Gods*, eds. Jaś Elsner and Ian Rutherford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 111–30. See also, J. N. Bremmer, "Religion", "Ritual" and the Opposition "Sacred vs. Profane": Notes Towards a Terminological "Genealogy", in *Ansichten Griechischer Rituale: Geburtstag-Symposium Für Walter Burkert*, ed. by Fritz Graf (Stuttgart; Leipzig: Teubner, 1998), 9–32.

‘secular’, and ‘private’ and ‘public’, Scullion avers that pilgrimages are too indistinct to warrant specificity. Scullion’s work focuses on the so-called pilgrimages of the fifth and fourth century (BCE) classical Greece, of which status he questions. Their journeyings could not have been pilgrimages, he argues, since the Greeks maintained the distinctions of compartmentalised spheres of the ‘sacred’ and the ‘secular’. However, our study focuses on (Afroasiatic) Jewish practice where the ‘sacred’ and the ‘secular’ were not polarised as separate and distinct, even if they were (which is unlikely in light of my discussion above) in a Graeco-Roman worldview. Quite possibly then, besides betraying a Graeco-Roman idealistic optic, Scullion’s all too positivistic interpretation of later pilgrimage practices in medieval Christianity is possibly (and anachronistically) read back as a blueprint to measure classical Greek practices of religious journeys, and is thereby found to be an anomaly, a point that his editors, Jaś Elsner and Ian Rutherford, make.⁷⁴³ In effect, Scullion commits what he is probably trying to avoid, that of defining Jewish cultic practices in terms of Christian universalism. Pilgrimage in first century Afroasiatic Judaism did not then have the accoutrements of being sacramental, for example.

By the time of the first century, diasporic pilgrimages revolved around journeyings to sites, festivals and cultic centres,⁷⁴⁴ as places that embody an

⁷⁴³ “We should perhaps observe, however, that in our view, he is working with a notion of pilgrimage which is heavily coloured by medieval Christianity (e.g. pp. 125–6), and that the assumption that ‘pilgrimage’ has to belong to the ‘sacred’ (assuming we accept a clear-cut distinction between ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’) may be unreasonable, if, for example, the point of pilgrimage is precisely to move as much as possible from one realm to the other” (Scullion, “Pilgrimage” and Greek Religion’, 33–4).

⁷⁴⁴ Pilgrimages to religious sites were very popular during the Second Sophistic. See Frederick Brenk, ‘Plutarch, Philosophy, Religion and Ethics’, in *The Oxford Handbook of the Second Sophistic*, ed. by William A. Johnson (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2017), 291–310; Ian C. Rutherford, ‘Pilgrimage’, in *The Oxford Handbook of the Second Sophistic*, ed. by William A. Johnson (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2017), 613–24.

ideal.⁷⁴⁵ There were no prescriptive accounts of Jewish pilgrimage. At most, what we have are themes and principles to the extent that the most we may conclude is that these were generally privileged spaces, not merely for their geopolitical stratagem, but for people who were economically predisposed to making the journey.

However, endogenous to these pilgrimages were attitudes and practices germane to the spirit of sacred journeyings. These attitudes were aligned with notions of devotion, celebration and sharing, while anticipative of enhanced fellowship, acceptance and kinship. In light of this, the working definition of pilgrimage, for the purpose of this dissertation, is: devotional journeyings in the ancient world, where pilgrims (1) leave their daily sphere of activity and abode, (2) to go to a place that the community has designated to be holy and which embody an ideal, (3) in order to worship or communicate with the divine, with the assumption that they also usually return to their homes again.

Some scholars acknowledge that the Ethiopian eunuch was probably on a pilgrimage, but none process the plausibility of this claim or explore its meaning for the Ethiopian eunuch's ethnoreligious agency.⁷⁴⁶ In this section, we will consider the utility of pilgrimage for the 'Jewish' agency of the Ethiopian eunuch in light of the socio-historical backdrop of our text. To do this we will first explore the immersive multicultural/multireligious nature of conviviality in the Afroasiatic strip, as an acknowledgment of the second consideration upon which we will embark, i.e., diasporic journeys. Thirdly, we will see that religious journeys were made to Jerusalem, as to a sacred space, with its attendant rituals and acts of respect. Fourthly, a plausible case will be made for the Ethiopian

⁷⁴⁵ *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, ed. by E. Alan Morinis (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1992), 4.

⁷⁴⁶ Witherington, *Acts*, 297; Spencer, 'The Ethiopian Eunuch and His Bible', 160.

eunuch's religious journey to be that of a cultic pilgrimage. Finally, reading and baptism as functions of pilgrimage will then be considered.

4.2.1.1 Conviviality in the Sinaitic Peninsula

Journeys funnelled through the Sinaitic Peninsula were a multi-ethnic and multicultural affair in the non-political sense of multiculturalism, as established in chapter 1. Pilgrimages were no less a multi-ethnic and multicultural affair. The Sinaitic Peninsula, variously and loosely known by extension as Arabia, Arabian Peninsula, the Negev, Eastern Egypt, the region of the Red Sea, facilitated on its northern border the travel of the Ethiopian eunuch. The Peninsula served as an intermediate area within the Afroasiatic region between Egypt and the Levant. This region, across the Sinai desert, was a common space of traverse and conviviality, whether between Egypt, Arabia, the Afroasiatic strip or Ethiopia, and all as part of a tradition of mobility and migration over centuries leading up to and during the Second Temple Period. It facilitated nomadic, migrant, commercial, diasporic and pilgrimage journeyings⁷⁴⁷ especially between the major cities of Alexandria in Egypt,⁷⁴⁸ and Elat and Petra in the Sinai Peninsula, emerging as a place of boundary crossing of different types.⁷⁴⁹ As a hub of

⁷⁴⁷ Israel Finkelstein and Avi Perevolotsky, 'Processes of Sedentarization and Nomadization in the History of Sinai and the Negev', *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, 279 (1990): 67–88.

⁷⁴⁸ Philo, like many Egyptians, made a pilgrimage from Alexandria to Jerusalem (Frag, *de providentia*, preserved in Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* VIII, 14.64 (GGS 43.1 = *Eus.* VIII.1,477). For rabbinic references of traffic between Alexandria to Jerusalem, see b. *Yom.* 38a-b; b. *Arak.* 10b *Bar.*; and b. *Sanh.* 107b, b. *Sot.* 47a.

⁷⁴⁹ Hezser, *Jewish Travel*, 76. Here, Hezser stresses how "the Sinai desert would have been crossed by caravans travelling from Petra and Elat to Egypt". This was largely not only due to the importance of Alexandria as a strategic sea port and commercial centre, but for its history of rich minerals such as gold and later monastic interests. See Sayed Yamani, "Cultural Heritage Management of the Archaeological Resources of the Deserts of Egypt," in *Oasis Papers 6: Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference of the Dakhleh Oasis Project*, ed. Roger S. Bagnall, Paola Davoli, and Colin A. Hope, Dakhleh Oasis Project: Monograph 15 (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2012), 33.

convergence of intercultural contact and interaction, knowledge and experiences were shared and traded.⁷⁵⁰

As alluded to above, it is within this Afroasiatic region that Luke positions the travel of Ethiopian eunuch's caravan to the coastal plains of Gaza⁷⁵¹ – κατὰ μεσημβρίαν⁷⁵² ἐπὶ τὴν ὁδὸν τὴν καταβαίνουσιν ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλὴμ εἰς Γάζαν (Acts 8:26). Given the international flavour of the different types of journeys – e.g., of trading *inter alia* perfume, frankincense and spice, and other luxury items⁷⁵³ – and of pilgrimages, the Peninsula was a conduit of 'interracial' and multicultural interaction of a convivial nature.

The long history of the ancient multiculturalism of Afroasiatic Judaism facilitated by the conviviality of the Sinaitic Peninsula is further accounted for by traces of migration and diasporic settlements in the Hebrew bible, which perhaps served as palimpsests of residual memory. Isaiah 11:11 recognises a range of diasporic settlements, including Assyria, Egypt, Cush, Elam and Babylon. 11:12 specifically links these communities as diasporic: דִּיִּשְׁפָּרְסִי (τοὺς διεσπαρμένους τοῦ Ἰούδα, LXX) – “the diasporans (the ones who are dispersed) of Judaea”. Significantly, Cush is at least inclusive of the regions both sides of the Nile to the Red Sea from Upper Egypt to the fifth and sixth cataract, and by the time of the first century, the Horn of Africa. The proliferation of settlements suggests ‘difference’ as constitutive of a broader commonality, a cultural particularity of a wider social

⁷⁵⁰ Mary Ann Stachow, “Do You Understand What You Are Reading?”, 229–31.

⁷⁵¹ Gaza was once one of the five cities of the Philistines (Joshua 13:3; 1 Samuel 6:17), which after being destroyed by Alexander Jannaeus was according to Josephus rebuilt by the governor Gabinius (*Ant.* 14.5.3).

⁷⁵² Although the LXX uses the phrase, κατὰ μεσημβρίαν (from μέσος and ἡμέρα, ‘midday’), as a temporal marker (Gen 18:1; 43:16; Deut 28:29; Jer 6:4), with the exception of Daniel 8:4, 9, which points to a spatial marker – see LSJ, 1105 – κατὰ μεσημβρίαν is closely related to the concrete reference of ἐπὶ τὴν ὁδὸν, indicating a spatial reference being linked to a direction.

⁷⁵³ R. C. C. Law, ‘North Africa in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods: 323 BC to AD 305’, in *The Cambridge History of Africa: C. 300 BC – AD 300*, ed. by J. D. Fage (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 2:156.

cohesion, and localised assimilation of a globally shared values-system. Yet this mosaic diaspora is uneven, indefinite and undulating. This indeterminacy underlies the complexity of first century Afroasiatic Judaism.

Adding to this indeterminacy is Zephaniah 3:10, “From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my worshippers, my scattered ones, shall bring my offering,” (בְּתִפְּוֹצֵי, literally, “the daughter of my dispersed ones”). Whether this seventh century oracle is speaking of a specific historical time or in eschatological terms, its projection of Israel’s diaspora is inclusive of Cush, of Ethiopia. Zephaniah’s interest might well have been motivated by his own possible association with Cushites, in that he is posited as the son of Cush (1:1). Roger Anderson Jr argues quite persuasively for Zephaniah’s Cushite identity as part of the common practice of migration and intermarriages in Judaea at the time.⁷⁵⁴

The inference from the foregoing biblical citations is that Jews were probably spread out in major parts of the Afroasiatic region, particularly in Nubia, Egypt and sub-Saharan East Africa.⁷⁵⁵ This coheres with an earlier age where Solomon’s kingdom incorporated the Sinai Peninsula (2 Kings 14:22; 16:6).⁷⁵⁶ Edward Ullendorff makes this assertion by further arguing two points. One, that despite the historical difficulties in reconciling the dates of the invasion of Judah in 2 Chronicles 21:16-17, the military alliance of the Arabs and Cushites could have been “an early pointer to South Arabian migrations to Ethiopia”. And two, there

⁷⁵⁴ Roger W. Anderson, Jr, ‘Zephaniah Ben Cushi and Cush of Benjamin: Traces of Cushite Presence in Syria-Palestine’, in *The Pitcher Is Broken: Memorial Essays for Gösta W. Ahlström*, ed. by Steven Winford Holloway and Lowell K. Handy, JSOTSupp 190 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 45–70.

⁷⁵⁵ According to Arthur Ernest Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), 64, 71, 127, there was a Jewish garrison in Elephantine as early as fifth century BCE. Cf. Archibald H. Sayce, ‘The Jewish Garrison and Temple in Elephantine’, *The Expositor*, 8, 2.2 (1911), 97–116; William Horbury and David Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁷⁵⁶ Edward Ullendorff, ‘Hebraic-Jewish Elements in Abyssinian (Monophysite) Christianity’, *JSS* 1.3 (1956): 220.

are several citations of Arabian Kingdoms in the Hebrew bible: כְּנָע which is closely associated with Cush (Gen. 10:7 and many other places), מִצְרַיִם (I Chron. 4:41, etc.), and חֲצֵרְמוֹת (Gen. 10:26),⁷⁵⁷ indicating familiarity of associations with the Afroasiatic strip. By the time of the first century when the League of Nations is mentioned at Pentecost in Acts 2:9-11, a significant number of (multicultural) diasporic Jews in attendance are accounted for by the Afroasiatic region, many of whom might well have been pilgrims – Cyrene, Libya, Egypt, Judaea, Elam and Arabia. Later in the second century, there is even some indication from rabbinic literature that the Ethiopian Kingdom ruled over the southern part of Sinai Peninsula.⁷⁵⁸ Indeed, the fluid socio-political associations of Nubians (or Ethiopians) with Judaeans cannot be denied but instead can account for the plausibility that the Ethiopian could possibly have had a Jewish agency.

The late eminent classicist, Frank Snowden, provides the bulk of anthropological evidence from cultural artefacts for the presence and activity of Ethiopians around the Mediterranean basin. His work, when introduced in the 1940s, did much to subvert and rebuff mainstream views within academia of the savagery of Ethiopians represented by the likes of the historian Grace Beardsley.⁷⁵⁹ He avers:

From the sixth century onwards until late in the [Roman] Empire, for a period covering a span of nearly one thousand years, artists, using the Negro as a model in almost every medium and as a

⁷⁵⁷ Edward Ullendorff, 'Hebraic-Jewish Elements', 220.

⁷⁵⁸ *Midrash Bemidbar Rabbah* 9:34. Since the text cites Rabbi Aqiba as visiting southern Arabia to alert the Jewish diaspora there of the oppressive Romans, its date is considered to be as early as 130 CE. He is cited as witnessing an Ethiopian ruling that area. See also, Talmud Bab. *Rosh Hashanah* 26a.

⁷⁵⁹ Grace Beardsley was a classics historian who argued that the private Ethiopian art of Graeco-Roman homes was deemed ugly and comical. See Grace M. Beardsley, *The Negro in Greek and Roman Civilization: A Study of the Ethiopian Type*, The Johns Hopkins University Studies in Archaeology, 4 (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University, 1929). For a contemporary critique of Beardsley's work, see J. L. Myres, 'The Negro in Greek and Roman Civilization: A Review Article', *Antiquity*, 4.16 (1930): 513. Cf. Keita, *Race and the Writing of History*, 50, 141. W. E. B. Du Bois was more strident in his remark, referring to Beardsley's work as a "stupid combination of scholarship and race prejudice which Johns Hopkins University published" in *The World and Africa and Color and Democracy* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), xxxiii.

favorite [sic.] in many, have bequeathed us a valuable anthropological gallery.⁷⁶⁰

Ethiopians were not only most represented in artwork but were known to comprise a prestigious part of the Persian army, not to mention that of the Ptolemies and the Carthaginians.⁷⁶¹ Even the first century Pliny the Elder held that Ethiopia once dominated as far north as Syria, at least until the Trojan wars.⁷⁶² How historically accurate this might be is immaterial to the imaginary of Roman historians like Pliny of the Second Temple Period. The mobile presence of Ethiopians throughout the history of the Empire is a testament to their high regard.⁷⁶³

Conceptualising human travel within the Sinaitic Peninsula as being constituted by conviviality enables the reader to see a sea of multicultural interactions peopled by relations that were sometimes subversive in character due to different versions of Jewish subcultures, different boundaries being crossed, and different purposes of travel. And where there is boundary crossing there is, as will be seen in the next section, subversion, not least for the Ethiopian eunuch, even if he were on a pilgrimage. Such is the context for the exchange of ideas, conversations and rituals, even outside of formally prescribed traditions.

4.2.1.2 Diasporic Journeys

Given the strategic geography for entering the Afroasiatic strip from Africa, the Sinaitic Peninsula was a hub for diasporic journeys of diasporic Jewish

⁷⁶⁰ Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, vii. A very large portion of these Ethiopians comprised peoples considered by anthropologists today as Negroes. In fact, the Negroid type, both in classical art and literature, was in a sense the most frequent example of the Ethiopian in Graeco-Roman usage

⁷⁶¹ Frank M. Snowden, Jr, *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1970), 121, 129, 131.

⁷⁶² Pliny *Natural History* 6.182.

⁷⁶³ Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, 185–86.

communities. Diaspora Studies scholars respect that ‘diaspora’ itself “is an ancient word”.⁷⁶⁴ Its ancient reference to the scattering of the Jews is exemplified by the production of the Septuagint translation, “the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures explicitly intended for the Hellenic Jewish communities in Alexandria (c. third century BCE), to describe the Jews living in exile from the homeland of Palestine”.⁷⁶⁵ For example, the LXX translation of Deut. 28:25 is “καὶ ἔσῃ διασπορὰ ἐν πάσαις βασιλείαις τῆς γῆς”.⁷⁶⁶ By the time of the sixth century (BCE) Persian conquest, the Jews were viewed as “a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your [the Persian emperor’s] kingdom” (Esther 3:8). It is the appropriation of this phenomenon that has witnessed the theorising of the term ‘diaspora’ itself by African and African American scholars in the 1950s and 1960s.⁷⁶⁷ The very history of the usage of the word, then, testifies to a particular relationship between Euromodernity and antiquity, covering a range of dispersions from coercive uprooting to voluntary displacement, and a particular appropriation by modern thinkers of the ancient world.⁷⁶⁸

But endogenous to the phenomenon of diaspora is that of ‘subculture’. In our case, it would be the challenging effort to stay Hebrew in the diaspora, holding onto the religious culture of the home country and memorialised myths (constructed over transitions) that one misses. The diaspora takes away a slice of the home culture stuck (and mythologised) in time and space (architecture) and

⁷⁶⁴ Paul Gilroy, ‘Diaspora’, *Paragraph*, 17.3 (1994): 207.

⁷⁶⁵ *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader*, ed. by Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003), 1.

⁷⁶⁶ Δὴ σε Κύριος ἐπὶ κοπὴν ἐναντίον τῶν ἐχθρῶν· ἐν ὁδῷ μὴ ἐξελεύσῃ πρὸς αὐτοὺς, καὶ ἐν ἑπτά ὁδοῖς φεύξῃ ἀπὸ προσώπου αὐτῶν· καὶ ἔσῃ διασπορὰ ἐν πάσαις βασιλείαις τῆς γῆς (Deut. 28:25).

⁷⁶⁷ Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, “Rewriting the African Diaspora: Beyond the Black Atlantic,” *African Affairs* 104.414 (2005): 39.

⁷⁶⁸ It is in this way that Carter invokes his analytical reflection on the black Atlantic experience. See, Carter Jr, “Diaspora Poetics & (Re)Constructions of Differentness”, 203–5.

preserves the tradition as authentic and pristine. Yet, in other ways, because of their indigenisation to the land of their abode, their conviviality would reach out to the majority non-Jews where they would share religious occasions with them, such as baby dedication, and naming ceremonies. We see this, for example, in Elephantine, Egypt.⁷⁶⁹ Given the greater distance of Ethiopia from Jerusalem, plural religious practices as an expression of Judaism would therefore be more compounded with complexities of avowal and disavowal, of continuity and discontinuity, and of disagreement and compromise.

As previously noted in chapter 3, subcultures constituting multicultural diasporas subvert, by definition, parent home cultures by decentring the deployment of power-knowledge spaces. Here I am engaging further Foucault's notion of the deployment of power-knowledge within a discourse, which may have a closer bearing to our subject at hand.⁷⁷⁰ Luke as a Jewish diasporic, subcultural author would be expected, then, to cluster his narratives around texts, images and voices that acquire authority to form a dominant discourse at a historical moment in time and space, and to determine the reality of what is seen. We have already seen this in our previous chapter (three) where Luke uses a double entendre wordplay with *ὁδός* to refer to 'the way' as a movement of proto-Christianity and yet the convivial space of land, i.e., 'the road'. We also see this in his foregrounding of Antioch in his mission narratives as if to decentre the role and prominence of Jerusalem.⁷⁷¹ Likewise, dominant narratives are subverted by

⁷⁶⁹ Bezalel Porten, 'The Religion of the Jews of Elephantine in Light of the Hermopolis Papyri', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 28.2 (1969): 116–121; Allen Kerkeslager, 'Jewish Pilgrimage and Jewish Identity in Hellenistic and Early Roman Egypt', in *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt*, ed. by David Frankfurter (Leiden; Boston; Köln: Brill, 1998), 110–1. For the pluralistic flexibility of Jewish religious attendance, see Melody D. Knowles, *Centrality Practiced: Jerusalem in the Religious Practice of Yehud and the Diaspora During the Persian Period* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2006), 127.

⁷⁷⁰ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Random House USA Inc, 1988).

⁷⁷¹ An example of tension between Jerusalem and the Mediterranean centres might be exhibited also in the missional activities of Paul. Jerusalem seems to want to control Gentile mission in Acts 11.1-3 and 15.1-35;

diasporic communities through the decentring of their power-knowledge centres through the process of indigenisation, of which strategies such as hybridity, irony and mimicry are co-constitutives. In the case of the Ethiopian eunuch story, the plot of the narrative is posited in a liminally neutral, trans-boundary space – a decentring desert(ed) space. It is a desert space outside the regime of the Jerusalem hegemony, albeit within the Afroasiatic strip.⁷⁷² On their way, both the Ethiopian eunuch and Philip are occupying neutral space, which becomes a communal though hybrid space that places them on equal footing. The deserted space of marginality is now a centred space of brotherhood. In effect, the deserted *cum* convivial space is rhetorically and strategically positioned within the pericope for purposes of subversion.

This subversion of power-knowledge spaces by diasporic subcultures has important implications for conceptualising diasporic communities, an idea that is advanced by and intrinsic to Gilroy's concept of the decentring and subversive role of the black Atlantic.⁷⁷³ My contention here is that an ethnoreligious construction of the Ethiopian Eunuch can be made around the notion of his Jewishness belonging to a distant diasporic community who had intermittent,

and Paul's missional activity in 21:17-26. For the shift from a Jerusalem-centred world to a Mediterranean-centred one, see Alexander, "In Journeyings Often", 17-49 (p. 30). These Antiochene narratives and allusions are deployed within the discourse as power-knowledge that may close down or open up other narratives: such as the missionary journeys of Paul. For the discourse dynamics of this, see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1991), 135-69. Incidentally, the body is the locus of discourse enactment or contestation, suggesting that if one controls the body one begins to provide a counterpoint to the power-knowledge.

⁷⁷² Christopher R. Matthews, 'Acts and the History of the Earliest Jerusalem Church', 174. *Contra* J. Bradley Chance, *Jerusalem, the Temple, and the New Age in Luke-Acts* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988), because of the salvific role of Jerusalem in the Hebrew Bible, wishes to tie the mission activity of Acts to the centralisation power of Jerusalem. There might be an overplay with this. While Luke does not explicitly replace Jerusalem as a centre of religious orthodoxy, *per se*, Matthews is perhaps too positivistic in this assertion, as there does appear to be a shift in the book of Acts with respect to the centralising hold of missions. If we take Acts 1:8 as a signal point of departure for the genealogy and expansion of missions, then it might be critical to note that Jesus gave this enunciation outside of any of the new 'centres' or so-called headquarters of the 'church'. See, e.g., Nicholas H. Taylor, 'Caligula, the Church of Antioch and the Gentile Mission', *R&T* 7.1 (2000): 1-23.

⁷⁷³ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 57-8, 76-7.

convivial contact with its mother community through religious pilgrimages, notwithstanding trade and commerce. Then his African ethnoreligious practice of Judaism would be, by definition, subcultural in type and kind, providing a different kind of religious contact with the centralised power of (Afroasiatic) Judaism in Jerusalem. This rich exchange of perspectives and practices is not implausible. Like Gilroy's black Atlantic, the Afroasiatic Sinai Peninsula might serve as a trope to facilitate a rich agonistic space, between the Jewish diasporic communities of the Mediterranean basin, Egypt and Ethiopia (Africa), less in the sense of boundary transgressive strangers and more in the sense of boundary crossing brothers.⁷⁷⁴ This foregrounding of Sinaitic conviviality neither creates, I contend, an autochthonous, undifferentiated Black Atlantic-type (privileged) subjectivity nor a rootless cosmopolitan-type subjectivity, both of which valorise themselves as superior to nationhood identity – something for which Gilroy's postulate of cosmopolitanism has been criticised.⁷⁷⁵ Instead, this Sinaitic conviviality only serves to highlight another – not alternative – mode of interaction gained through a long and open history of travel, migration, displacement and diasporic connections.

Therefore, diasporic journeys despite its subversive elements is not to be construed as either antithetical to or the same as assimilation. If it were especially antithetical, it would assert binarisms of first century Jerusalem Judaeans vs.

⁷⁷⁴ For further development of the plausibility of this idea, see Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000) and Iain Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings: The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

⁷⁷⁵ Laura Crisman, 'Postcolonial Studies and Beyond: The South African Differences between Sol Plaatjes and Peter Abrahams', in *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, eds. Ania Loomba *et al* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 252–71. Crisman argues against a hegemonic reading of the Black Atlantic, which privileges and valorises transnationalism above nationalism as if critical nationalism has little plausible to offer to anticolonialists' struggles and moreover to the counterculture to Euromodernity. For a critique of Gilroy's seemingly elitist view of "rootless cosmopolitanism", see Simon Gikandi, 'Race and Cosmopolitanism', *American Literary History*, 14.3 (2002): 598.

diasporic Jews, invader vs. native, nonrabbinic vs. rabbinic Judaism or colonial settler vs. indigenous where never the twain would meet. Texts on Afroasiatic homeland, although without this nomenclature, point to a fairly free-flowing interaction between migrants, merchants and pilgrims; although, this sort of conviviality is hardly attributable to the Ethiopian eunuch story.⁷⁷⁶ Instead, the impression is given that he meets Philip, but does not mix with him; he meets Jewish people in Jerusalem as a sympathiser and so becomes a Godfearer or at best a proselyte, but he does not mix. He cannot be a Jew. The nature of these Manichean oppositions assumes a clear, bounded, structural apparatus of segregation – for which there is little evidence – not a moment, event or process. It is a kind that would persist through shifting bureaucratic civic modalities that clinically administrate arrangements for the colonised, where they meet with the coloniser but do not mix. Such assumptions seem to characterise commentaries on the Ethiopian eunuch narrative, which, despite their best intentions, reinscribe bifurcated realities of segregation.

In light of the above, Afroasiatic Judaism as a ‘diasporic religion’ could be seen to accommodate the rich modes of travel in antiquity, including pilgrimages. Diasporic journeys would have prepared the way for pilgrimages of different sorts, in that the trails would have already been set for and inherited by such religious journeys.

⁷⁷⁶ Stanley E. Porter, ‘Paul as Jew, Greek, and Roman: An Introduction’, in *Paul: Jew, Greek and Roman*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, Pauline Studies, 5 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008), 1–6; Richard B. Harms, *Paradigms from Luke-Acts for Multicultural Communities* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2001); Sandra Schwartz, ‘The Trial Scene in the Greek Novels and in Acts’, in *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse*, eds. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele, SBLSymS, 20 (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2003), 105–38; Cynthia M. Baker, ‘“From Every Nation under Heaven”: Jewish Ethnicities in the Greco-Roman World’, in *Prejudice And Christian Beginnings: Investigating Race, Gender, And Ethnicity In Early Christianity*, eds. Laura Nasrallah and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2009), 79–100. In comparing Acts 2 with Philo, Baker argues that early Christianity was so fluid multiculturally that it was taken for granted.

4.2.1.3 Cultic Tourism

To re-appropriate CLR James's famous quote, but this time to the eunuch, 'the Ethiopian eunuch is in Jerusalem but not of Jerusalem'.⁷⁷⁷ But by virtue of 'being' in Jerusalem – in that his pilgrimage agency is very present – he is subtly and dynamically contributing to the reinvention of Judaism and the ethnographic tapestry of early Christianity. Such agency is not of a utopian yearning, as with the gaze of a museum visitor. Then he would be a cultic tourist. If the cultic journey is likened to that of a museum, then we would need to ask, how would the 'sacred' site be structured for tourists? What would be the 'structure' of the site? How would the site benefit from tourists? The corollary would follow that the site would co-opt their tourists as museums co-opt their visitors, in that the visitor's gaze is dismissive of the artificial housing of the artefacts. Such artefacts are objectified and transfigured for its aesthetics, for its curiosity and for its commodification. Then there is no visceral intimacy between the gazer and the gazed. Both are transfixed in different ways. The gazer by what is seen; the gazed by its diminution.

Jerusalem was known to attract cultic tourists during the Second Temple period. As Joachim Jeremias has shown, its Temple was the dominant economic institution, providing the major employment in the city.⁷⁷⁸ Witherington estimates that there were between 125,000 and 500,000 pilgrims visiting Jerusalem during festival season, despite the native population being around 60,000.⁷⁷⁹ (Josephus, on the other hand, cites a probably inflated figure of

⁷⁷⁷ Stuart Hall, "In but Not of Europe", 35.

⁷⁷⁸ Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period*, trans. by C. H. Cave and F. H. Cave (Philadelphia, PN: Fortress Press, 1975 [1962]), 21–7. For the temple's unparalleled size and structure, see Lee I. Levine, *Jerusalem: Portrait of the City in the Second Temple Period* (Philadelphia, PN: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002).

⁷⁷⁹ Ben Witherington III, *New Testament History: A Narrative Account* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2001), 180.

2,700,000 men attending in 66 CE [*War* 6.425].) Among this number would have been tourists. Herod the Great possibly had them in mind when constructing the Outer Court of the Temple, the Court of the Gentiles.

It was known, for example, that religious tourists would try and gift their offerings to the Temple. Josephus in *Ant.* 3:318-319 refers to travellers from beyond the Euphrates who had travelled to Jerusalem and tried to present their offerings but were forbidden because they were not observant Jews. These, in the spirit of a multireligious context, came to pay their respects to the famous Jerusalem Temple. They were religious tourists, as it were. It may be conceivable, then, that it was also in the spirit of religious pluralism that Herod built the temple with a Gentile court. For the observant Jews, however, their sacred festivals were not to be objectified, transfigured nor commodified. Given how our text predisposes the Ethiopian eunuch, it is very unlikely that he was a cultic tourist. He journeyed to Jerusalem purposefully to worship, as will be seen next.

4.2.1.4 Cultic Pilgrimage

Notwithstanding Jerusalem as a sacred site of destiny, there is another major literary signifier that points to the Ethiopian eunuch being on a cultic pilgrimage. The key text is Acts 8:27d-28 – ὃς ἐληλύθει προσκυνήσων εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ, ἣν τε ὑποστρέφων καὶ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τοῦ ἄρματος αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀνεγίνωσκειν τὸν προφήτην Ἡσαΐαν [He had gone to worship in Jerusalem and now while returning home and seated in his chariot, he was engaged in reading the prophet Isaiah]. The (nominative) future active participle, προσκυνήσων, which is rare in NT, is a telic participle, indicating purpose.⁷⁸⁰ In fact, the phrase, προσκυνήσων εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ, is repeated in Acts 24:11, where Paul testifies before Governor Felix that he had

⁷⁸⁰ A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1934), 1128, indicates that the future participle of purpose is popular in Classical Greek. It only occurs 5 times in NT, 4 of which are in Acts (8:27; 22:5; 24:11, 17).

earlier gone to Jerusalem (in order) to worship, indicating that he was on a pilgrimage. Significantly, several scholars note that Paul was referring to his pilgrimage but fail to give equal recognition to the Ethiopian eunuch's journey.⁷⁸¹

Προσκυνήσων betrays an intentionality in this context that can only be teleologically realised in cultic worship. Reinforced by the perfect, ἐληλύθει, it denotes that he had gone expressly to worship. His journey is not a wistful one, hoping to get into the temple, as it were. He purposefully journeyed, believing that he would worship in the temple. And now he is returning from a successful pilgrimage. Significantly, worship, which Luke foregrounds, coheres with the long pietistic association for which Ethiopians were reputed among the Graeco-Romans.⁷⁸²

Most scholars agree that if he were a castrated eunuch and a (African, diasporic) Jew, then there might be irony in the phrase, ἐληλύθει προσκυνήσων εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ, since castrated eunuchs were forbidden from entering the temple (Deut. 23.1; see also 1QS^a 2.5–6), and bearing in mind that the Court of the Gentiles was reserved for non-Jews – although the lame and the blind possibly entered there.⁷⁸³ In which case, it might reinforce the notion that his journey amounted to curiosity – the curiosity of a sympathiser of the Jews. However, it is possible, even perhaps probable given my later argument for his chamberlain identity, that Luke does not contradict his intentionality in the pericope. Luke renders no later twist nor makes any counterstatement in the story in order to correct the irony.

⁷⁸¹ See, for example, Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008), 598; Schnabel, *Acts*, 957.

⁷⁸² Eight century BCE, Homer, *Hist.* 2.146; fifth century BCE, Herodotus, *Hist.* 2.139; first century BCE Diodorus *Hist.* 2.139. These texts reflect that Ethiopians aroused the imagination of Graeco-Romans to the extent that they were sometimes idealised as the benchmark for humanity.

⁷⁸³ Jeremias suggests that Matthew 21:14 is an example of the blind and lame entering the Court of the Gentiles – Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 118. Furthermore, early rabbinic tradition suggests that the lame could attend the Temple under particular conditions: M. *Shab.* vi.8.

The reader is expected to anticipate a realistic scenario where a (Jewish) ‘eunuch’ worships in Jerusalem. In which case, the case for his identity as a classical (castrated) eunuch might be placed in doubt. Contrariwise, there might be grounds that suppose and indeed throw light on the plausibility that he is a eunuch after a particular similitude of עָרִיס in the Hebrew bible, to which we will return later.

As alluded to above, and in light of the Pentecostal League of Nations in Acts 2:9-11, which paints a picture of an eschatological gathering of Israel (see chapter 3), the Ethiopian eunuch’s pilgrimage might also have been seen by Luke as an eschatological journeying back to Jerusalem, fulfilling a prophesy of the people of Cush in Zeph. 3:10 – “From beyond the rivers, Cush, my worshippers, the daughter of my diasporic people, will bring me gifts”. The phrase, “from beyond the rivers of Cush” [מֵעֵבֶר נְהַר־יִכּוּשׁ], is an unequivocal reference to the far-flung Jewish diasporans – ‘the worshippers’ – who will return to Jerusalem bearing gifts to YHWH. This occasion is eschatological since the next verse asserts that this will happen “on that day...” (Zeph. 3.11). Isaiah 18:1, 2 & 7 are the closest parallels to this,⁷⁸⁴ though 19:21 speaks of the Egyptians turning to God, but not to Jerusalem. Of greater consequence is the suggestion in Zeph. 3:10 of the phrase, עֲתֵרִי בַת־פּוֹצִי (my worshippers, the daughter of my diasporic people). The prophet’s oracle appears to be acknowledging that the Cushites were already worshipping YHWH as his daughter in the pre-exilic diaspora.⁷⁸⁵ This is Rodney Sadler Jr’s point:

⁷⁸⁴ Here in Isa. 18, Cushites are described favourably in terms of their international diplomacy and craftsmanship (v. 2a), distinguishing physiognomy and war-like (קָוֶה) characteristics (2b, 7b).

⁷⁸⁵ The Hebrew construct does not make for a clear translation. עֲתֵרִי could be contradistinctive to בַּת־פּוֹצִי, meaning ‘my worshippers’ and a different group, ‘daughter my diaspora’. This is the position that Gene Rice takes, in spite of the absence of the distinguishing *waw* (ו): native Cushites and Judaeans refugees. See Gene Rice, ‘The African Roots of the Prophet Zephaniah’, *JRT* 36.1 (1979): 74. It maintains the Cushites as worshippers of YHWH. Taking the possessive nouns as appositional nouns, Charles Copher suggests that both refer to one group, as does Rodney Sadler. See Copher, ‘Black Presence in the OT’ 161; Rodney Steven

The prophet has portrayed a scenario where either dislocated Yahwists dwelt in pre-exilic Cush or where Cushites could be welcomed into the most intimately Israelite/Judahite practice, Yahwism.⁷⁸⁶

Sadler's postulate, that it is plausible to surmise that there were Cushites worshipping Yahweh in pre-exilic times, speaks to the notion of a diversity of the Hebrew diaspora. If this is the case, then the eschatological call of the Hebrew people by the Hebrew God from the diverse spread of the diaspora could be seen as a typological rendezvous in the calling of the Ethiopian eunuch.

While the text does not indicate which festival the Ethiopian eunuch is embarking on, given the considerable importance of the journey it would not be unreasonable to suggest that it was a prominent one, even the Passover and Pentecost.⁷⁸⁷ A journey of several weeks – possibly up to five months⁷⁸⁸ – might encourage a longer stay than a journey of two or three days. There is, therefore, no reason to suggest that he was not there for several weeks. However, it is hardly likely that it was specifically the Pentecost of Acts 2, given that there was probably considerable time between, one, Philip's nomination in response to a dispute which grew between Greek speaking Jews and Hebrew speaking Jews in Acts 6 (ἐγένετο γογγυσμός τῶν Ἑλληνιστῶν πρὸς τοὺς Ἑβραίους, 6:1) and, two, Philip's encounter with the Samaritans and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8.

Sadler, Jr, *Can a Cushite Change His Skin? An Examination of Race, Ethnicity, and Othering in the Hebrew Bible*, Library of Biblical Studies (New York; London: T&T Clark, 2005), 76.

⁷⁸⁶ Sadler, Jr, *Can a Cushite Change His Skin?* 78.

⁷⁸⁷ Pentecost, the 'Feast of Weeks' (from ἑορτὴν ἑβδομάδων in Deut. 16:10, Ex. 34:22 LXX; from שבועות), was the second of the three great pilgrimage festivals to Jerusalem – the others being the Passover and Feast of Tabernacles – celebrated seven weeks or fifty days after the Passover. See Ex. 23:16; 34:22; Lev. 23:15-16; Deut. 16:9-10; 2 Chron. 8:13. The festival in time became associated with the gifts of the covenant and law at Sinai. See *Jub.* 1:1; 6:17-19; 14:20; 22:1-16; 1QS I, 8-11, 25; 4Q266 frag. 11, 17-18.

⁷⁸⁸ Bock, *Acts*, 342 (8:27-28).

Some scholars speculate that he is on a pilgrimage without looking at the socio-religious implications of this.⁷⁸⁹ However, drawing on Victor and Edith Turner's work,⁷⁹⁰ F. Scott Spencer insightfully comments that by virtue of being on a pilgrimage, the Ethiopian eunuch occupied a liminal space since pilgrimages as a form of religious passage rites functioned as "liminoid phenomena".⁷⁹¹ He is not a tourist. Moreover, pilgrimages are generally cherished and embarked upon by the diasporan, whether religious or ethnic, as a once-in-a-life-time practice. The Ethiopian eunuch appears to be on a diasporic religious journey to Jerusalem, for "he had journeyed to Jerusalem to worship" (Acts 8:27c).⁷⁹² That is not to deny, that anything could have been associated with the journey inclusive of personal interest. It could have been, for example, the need to reconnect with religious peers, or embark on a fact-finding mission, or repeat a tradition of pilgrimage. However, whatever the purpose, it is clear from the text that he went intentionally to worship in Jerusalem, and this intentionality most likely played a key role in his identity as a pilgrim.

4.2.1.5 Reading as a Communal Act of Joining – κολλάομαι

Reading devotionally as a reflexive act of renewal, the Ethiopian eunuch is captured by Luke in Acts 8:32-33 as reading one of the *Ebed-YHWH* (Servant of YHWH or otherwise known as Suffering Servant) songs in Isaiah, particularly 53:7-8.⁷⁹³ However, this act is best construed as a communal pilgrimage effort,

⁷⁸⁹ See, for example, Bruce, 'Philip and the Ethiopian', 379; Curt Niccum, 'One Ethiopian Eunuch Is Not the End of the World: The Narrative Function of Acts 8:26-40', in *A Teacher for All Generations: Essays in Honor of James C. VanderKam*, ed. Eric F. Mason et al., vol. 1, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 153 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011), 888.

⁷⁹⁰ Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 1-39.

⁷⁹¹ F. Scott Spencer, 'The Ethiopian Eunuch and His Bible', 162.

⁷⁹² "ὃς ἐληλύθει προσκυνήσων εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ". Note the rare form of the telic participle: future active participle.

⁷⁹³ See Ivan Engnell, 'The 'Ebed Yahweh Songs and the Suffering Messiah in "Deutero-Isaiah"', *Bulletin of John Rylands Library* 31 (1948), 54-93; Gregory Goswell, 'A Royal Isaianic Servant of YHWH?',

which Philip engages by joining him. In this way, the convivial optic may serve to correct the Cartesian gaze.

Keeping in mind the social current of collectivism, the reading practice of the Ethiopian eunuch will be seen as a collectivist reading (or a communal reading) as opposed to an individualistic one. In effect, it is a reading together from a tradition into another tradition of understanding. He, by virtue of his diasporic tradition, comes communally with his cohort – fellow travellers, as he is not travelling alone (as will be further seen below) – to the text with a tradition. It is a tradition, possibly aligned with art, ritual and ceremony, that comes down from what Kwasi Wiredu calls, “the collective mind” of ancestral societies.⁷⁹⁴ This, in addition to the pilgrimage context, is why I translate the imperfect verb, ἀνεγίνωσκεν, as a durative (or progressive) imperfect – “he is engaged in reading”.⁷⁹⁵ It is in light of his tradition that he is being challenged by an authoritative reading of Isaiah to seek a new way of imagining the prophecy and other previously held Jewish eschatological anticipations and aspirations.

This act of communal reading forms the basis for the act of joining, and this joining becomes a constitutive part of this pilgrimage. Remember, Philip is instructed by the Holy Spirit to be joined to the pilgrimage (Acts 8:29), as part of God’s plan of invitation to all peoples to join his salvific Kingdom – the latter point we established in chapter 3. He is in for a surprise. The aorist imperative, κολλήθητι (from κολλάομαι, to join oneself to), is convivially a hospitality verb of joining in Luke-Acts. The verb maybe rendered as middle (reflexive) or passive.

Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament 31.2 (2017): 185–201.

⁷⁹⁴ Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 28.

⁷⁹⁵ Since the Ethiopian eunuch is reading for an unspecified, but probably, prolonged period of time it is likely that it was engaged, even intentional reading. Implicit in commentaries where it is supposed that the Ethiopian eunuch is reading vacuously, ἀνεγίνωσκεν would be understood as a tendential imperfect – “he was trying or attempting to read”.

Most commentaries rightly render the former as probable but without due reflection on the implications of this option. A look at its use in Luke-Acts would therefore be instructive. Of the 12 times that it is used in NT, it is used 7 times in Luke-Acts. With the exception of Luke 10:11⁷⁹⁶ where the verb is used metaphorically, in each case of Luke 15:15, Acts 5:13, 8:29, 9:26, 10:28, and 17:34, *κολλάομαι* is forcing the hand of the actor to cross transgressively to the other side where the balance of power and honour is, and there be joined. It is a transgressive crossing across systemic borders, which constitutes interlocking systems of either domination or emancipation. Let us look at these in turn, saving our text, Acts 8:29, to last.

First, Luke 15:15 tells of the ‘prodigal son’ who ‘joins himself’ to one of the Gentile citizens of the far country to where he migrates, where he is symbolically cut off from his Jewish community due to his contamination with pigs, which epitomised ceremonial uncleanness – *πορευθεὶς ἐκολλήθη ἐνὶ τῶν πολιτῶν τῆς χώρας ἐκείνης* [Having gone he joined himself to one of the citizens of that region]. While the context lends itself to the aorist middle, *ἐκολλήθη*, being translated as “he hired himself out to...” (NRSV) or “he found himself a job with...” (my translation), the verb denotes his joining with the ceremonially unclean as a transgressive crossing to the other side. To see this, it is helpful to ask: is the subject of the verb – i.e., the signal actor – the initiating (active) agent of joining here, or is he the ‘acted upon’ actor by another (passive) agent? If the latter, then it would translate, “he was hired by one of the citizens of that region”. This passive translation can seem plausible, only that the context consistently situates the prodigal as being the active actor – in v. 13, he gathered all his

⁷⁹⁶ Luke 10 is the mission tract where Jesus appointed 70 disciples to witness in certain Galilean cities. 10:11 cites Jesus’s counsel in the event of hospitality being rescinded. Significantly, the verb of joining in the aorist passive participle, *κολληθέντα*, is invoked metaphorically and sarcastically to signify the antithesis of joining, i.e., what will happen in the event of hospitality being denied and foreclosed: “We will wipe off the dust (*τὸν κονιορτὸν*) which clings (*τὸν κολληθέντα*) to your feet...”

belongings, he set off to a far country, he squandered his living; in v. 14 he spent his money and he was in need; and now in v.15 he hired himself out. However, when the subject is considered as the signal actor, the initiating (active) agent of joining, the verb behaves as a middle, reflexive verb where it is rendered, ‘to join oneself to’ – “he hired himself out to one of that region’s citizens”. In effect, this conviviality verb of hospitality presents the actor as initiating the joining to someone of higher status or in this specific instance of the narrative, of higher value in the eyes of the author. The one doing the hiring contingently has the oppressive power of class and ethnoreligion. The balance of power is discursively with the ‘Gentile’, the commerce (and honour) of which the Jewish son needs. The son joins a forbidden household to be employed by them. Indeed, the way the verb behaves in the ‘Lost Son’ story is perspicaciously instructive of how it behaves in the rest of its deployment in Acts.

This is seen in the second instance of *κολλάομαι*. Acts 5:13 is part of a transition section (5:13-16), which reinforces the message of the previous pericope of Ananias and Sapphira, and sets the basis for the subsequent scene where the apostles are imprisoned: οὐδεὶς ἐτόλμα κολλᾶσθαι αὐτοῖς [no one dared to join themselves to them]. Here, 5:13 speaks specifically to the activities of the apostles at Solomon’s portico, where some people – probably Jewish and Jewish affiliates, since Solomon’s portico was along the eastern side of the temple, the gathering point of the Gentiles⁷⁹⁷ – were afraid to be convivially joined to them (*κολλᾶσθαι*, present passive infinitive). The connotation appears to imply a crossing over to the other side – i.e., a transgressive crossing across systemic borders, which in this case constitutes interlocking systems of emancipation. In this case, the

⁷⁹⁷ Keener, *Acts*, 1:1074. However, while Verheyden does not specifically identify Solomon’s portico with the Gentiles, he does with “the outer fringes of the Jerusalem temple complex surrounding the general court”. Joseph Verheyden, *The Figure of Solomon in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Tradition: King, Sage and Architect* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 147.

Gentiles were reluctant to make this transgressive border crossing to the disciples who are discursively positioned as having the balance of power – and therefore honour – because of their religious prowess of healing (5:15-16).

Third, 9:26 refers to the visit of the now reformed Paul (but still Saul in this passage) to Jerusalem where he attempts to join himself (κολλᾶσθαι) to the disciples, who in literary terms have the balance of power, since they have something – honour – that Paul wants. The disciples are anxious about this ‘joining’ – πάντες ἐφοβοῦντο αὐτὸν (v. 26) – because of Paul’s prior violent relationship with their movement, the Jesus Way. Paul’s joining is facilitated by Barnabas (Βαρναβᾶς δὲ ἐπιλαβόμενος αὐτὸν ἤγαγεν πρὸς τοὺς ἀποστόλους, v. 27) and amounts to a convivially hospitable embracing of him by the disciples, among whom he eventually and freely moved in and out – εἰσπορευόμενος καὶ ἐκπορευόμενος εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ (v. 28). His was a crossing of religiously systemic borders facilitated by an enabling hospitality.

Fourth, Acts 10 finds Peter before the centurion Gentile but Godfearer (εὐσεβὴς καὶ φοβούμενος τὸν θεὸν v.2), Cornelius. He is challenged by the Holy Spirit to join (κολλᾶσθαι, v. 28) the Gentiles of whom Cornelius epitomises. The verb, κολλᾶσθαι, indicates the distribution of power in literary terms between Peter and Cornelius. Peter, given the stature of his persona, would be expected to be the one hosting the balance of power in the text. However, κολλᾶσθαι indubitably points to Peter’s need to join Cornelius – the Jew to join the Gentile, the Jew to gain honour by his association with a Gentile. This joining is characterised by a communal hospitality – κολλᾶσθαι only makes sense in terms of hospitality. It is an association that is normally forbidden (ἀθέμιτόν, v.28)⁷⁹⁸ and therefore

⁷⁹⁸ There were options that Jews typically had with respect to fellowship with Gentiles, all of which sprung from the central need to obey Jewish kosher laws. Cf. Markus Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakhah and the Beginning of Public Ethics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 58.

requires the crossing of transgressive borders of systemic dominating proportions.

Fifth, 17:34 records a number of Graeco-Gentiles of repute being joined (κολληθέντες) to Paul, who is valorised as having superior knowledge about the resurrection of the dead upon his discussing religious matters with them. Paul has the balance of rhetorical power in the text. He is attributed honour. Yet their joining is a collectivist, convivial one of crossing religious and philosophical systemic borders.

In each of the cases instantiated, the actor is initiating the joining to another of, even if forbidden, higher status: the prodigal son to his new employer, the Jewish sympathisers to the apostles, Paul to the disciples, Peter to Cornelius, the Athenians to Paul, and as we are about to see, Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch. The higher status is determined by who is attributed rhetorical power and, by inference, honour in the discourse. The persons to be joined to are the ones to whom the actors ‘need’ to be joined. The actors, who need to be joining, are received by the other who has the capacity to accept joining and this receiving is often explicitly characterised by hospitality.⁷⁹⁹ Of interest is the fact that the subject of the joining in the Acts stories could either be people of The Way, like Peter, or people not of The Way, like the Jewish sympathisers or Athenians. Both sides need to be joined together. Yet, the irony is not missed when the ‘Christian’ or Jew is discursively positioned to initiate the joining to the ‘Other’ who is unlike them, as in the Peter-Cornelius case. But neither should the nuance of collectivism as a cultural characteristic be lost on the implications of each story. It

⁷⁹⁹ Dinkler usefully points out that *δέχομαι*, which denotes the notion of receiving and welcoming, is a verb of hospitality, and is used as such in Acts. It moves from a stage of welcoming people “to references to welcoming ‘living messages’ (7:38), the ‘word of God’ (8:14; 11:1), the ‘message’ (17:11) and ‘letters’ (22:5; 28:21). For Luke, receiving God’s people and receiving God’s word are both matters of hospitality”, Dinkler, ‘Interpreting Pedagogical Acts’, 421–2.

is the collectivist culture that renders systemic borders what they are intersectionally – whether political, socio-political, geopolitical, ethnopolitical, gender-political or econo-political.

Therefore, there are so far two major characteristics of *κολλάομαι* as employed by Luke-Acts. Given the discursive distribution of power, they are, one, a joining, belonging and connecting across borders that were meant to keep (the) Other(s) out; and, two, a joining facilitated by the spirit of hospitality, but, in the case of the Acts stories, at the behest of Pentecostal hospitality. Scott Spencer seems to miss this nuance by restricting hospitality to the formal confines of the home, following the strict codes of etiquette and behavioural conventions that define personal exchanges.⁸⁰⁰ While he acknowledges the importance of hospitality as a theme in Luke-Acts, he suggests that “Philip does not linger long enough to require lodging!” (The exclamation mark, supplied by Spencer, renders his deduction emphatic.)⁸⁰¹ This logocentric reading misses the ancient meaning of hospitality, the spirit of hospitality, and, more particularly, Luke’s meaning of hospitality as defined in our previous chapter: a Pentecostal-driven invitation and reception that facilitates joining across systemic, even transgressive borders.

The story of the Ethiopian eunuch, which instantiates our sixth example of *κολλάομαι*, especially demonstrates *κολλάομαι* as a verb of transgressive crossing across systemic borders and a verb of enabling (Pentecostal) hospitality. Philip is told by the Holy Spirit ‘to be joined’ (*κολλήθητι*) to the caravan (8:29). But since the reading is a collectivist engagement, Philip will join the pilgrimage as an

⁸⁰⁰ For more on the rigorous conventions of ancient hospitality, see Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels*, 131–85.

⁸⁰¹ Spencer, *The Portrait of Philip in Acts*, 142. However, John Weaver appears to capture the spirit of conviviality by suggesting, “The eunuch exhibits the ancient virtue of hospitality, which results in Philip accompanying and guiding him to a Christological reading of Isaiah... Hospitality was often associated with the reception of new knowledge and insight in the ancient world, and, elsewhere in Luke-Acts, the disposition for hospitality is determinative of insight into the wisdom and plan of God”, John B. Weaver, ‘Narratives of Reading in Luke-Acts’, *Theological Librarianship* 1.1 (2008): 29.

already-reading community who are religiously submissive to the authority of Hebrew scripture. It is a devotional reading for transformation. In so doing, Philip's joining is to be a culturally mutual joining of belonging, of interaction, of intimacy. This is what ensues in the rest of the story and constitutes the surprise of the Pentecostal-driven *κολλάομαι*.

As Philip runs beside the Ethiopian eunuch's chariot (8:30) – an indication that there were likely several chariots travelling in convoy, since Philip was able to keep up with the chariot (and the more chariots the slower the convoy)⁸⁰² – he meets the Ethiopian eunuch 'reading aloud' (*lectio viva voce*), a reading practice which was typical in antiquity.⁸⁰³ It is reasonable to assume that this reading would have been part of a larger portion of the Isaiah scroll.⁸⁰⁴ In fact, the reading is part of a longer passage, Isaiah 52-56, the latter part of which ch. 56 signals the reclamation of eunuchs to have their progeny and posterity secured in the temple (56:4-5) by way of an installation of a stele with a 'name'.⁸⁰⁵ Following Isaiah 53 – where the humiliation-exaltation reversal of vv. 7-8 in chiasmatic literary

⁸⁰² He was travelling in style – a chariot, probably escorted by an entourage – and he had purchased an expensive Isaiah scroll. Cf. K Bornhauser, *Studien zur Apostelgeschichte*, 96, cited in Spencer, *The Portrait of Philip in Acts*, 159. The larger the convoy the slower its pace. This could account for Philip being depicted as running alongside it, unless, alternatively, this is a supernatural incident, which is not a farfetched probability for Luke given the narrative's theme of supernatural guidance. This is Spencer's point (p. 154).

⁸⁰³ Paul J. Achtemeier, 'Omne Verbum Sonat: The New Testament and the Oral Environment of Late Western Antiquity', *JBL* 109.1 (1990), 3–27. Although, R. W. McCutcheon, 'Silent Reading in Antiquity and the Future History of the Book', *Book History* 18.1 (2015), 1–32, reminds us that the reading practices of antiquity were more varied and contingent than has been formerly acknowledged, there is nothing in Acts 8:26-40 to suggest that he was not reading aloud, especially given that Philip 'heard' the Ethiopian eunuch reading, v. 30. Furthermore, the practice of verbalising Torah went on to be preserved in rabbinic study as a celebrated quality. See *m. Abot* 6:6.

⁸⁰⁴ Luke does actually cite Isaiah 56:7 in his gospel (Luke 19:46).

⁸⁰⁵ Jacob L. Wright and Michael J. Chan, 'King and Eunuch: Isaiah 56:1–8 in Light of Honorific Royal Burial Practices', *JBL* 131.1 (2012): 99–119. Steffan Mathias makes the point that the passage also makes an implicit reference to the new ability for eunuchs to procreate through the return of his phallus: "Isaiah 56.5-6 promises a זָרַח וְשֵׁם, 'a monument and a name', to the eunuch; זָרַח, meaning both 'hand' and 'monument', is used here instead of מַעֲבָדָה, 'standing stone', and suggests a pun is being played, with זָרַח being euphemistic for the phallus", Steffan Mathias, 'Queering the Body: Un-Desiring Sex in Leviticus', in *The Body in Biblical, Christian and Jewish Texts*, ed. by Joan E. Taylor (London; New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 24, n. 39.

terms serves as “the structural pivot of the entire eunuch story”⁸⁰⁶ – comes the renewal of the covenant motif in Isaiah 54, which is then followed by the universal invitation to the new creation in ch. 55. Included in this great eschatological invitation is the prophetic promise in ch. 56 that foreigners and eunuchs will receive respectively full membership into the people of God and progeny and posterity in the courts of the temple (56:3-8).

David Pao is correct to suggest that this passage, Isaiah 52-56, forms part of the restoration programme in Luke-Acts, of which the Ethiopian eunuch plays a pivotal role.⁸⁰⁷ However, when considered in light of Isaiah 11:11-12 (the reclamation of the diasporan Cushites in the outer regions of the world) and 18:1, 2, 7 & 19:2 (the return of the diasporan Cushites to Jerusalem), inclusive of Luke’s restoration programme (of the outcasts) is his reclamation appeal of Acts 1:8. Pao overlooks this due to his diminishment of Luke’s ethnoreligious concern.⁸⁰⁸ He argues that, one, the incidence of the appellative εὐνοῦχος in our story essentially outweighs that of Αἰθίοψ five to one, suggesting that Luke’s central concern is the castrated eunuch as an outcast; two, Luke does not reveal the eunuch’s ethnicity (as a Jew);⁸⁰⁹ and, three, the socio-political appellative δυνάστης renders the socio-political gloss of εὐνοῦχος moot. His reading assumes, then, that the term εὐνοῦχος is not a reference to his professional status, even though this is the primary meaning of סָרִיס (*sa* and *resi* “he who is at the head”).⁸¹⁰ It only came to take on the secondary meaning of ‘eunuch as the

⁸⁰⁶ Spencer, *The Portrait of Philip in Acts*, 174. Spencer demonstrates this through mapping an intricate chiasmic pattern of the pericope (pp. 131-2).

⁸⁰⁷ Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, 140–2.

⁸⁰⁸ Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, 141.

⁸⁰⁹ Although Pao does allow for the possibility of ‘Ethiopian’ being a substantive for Ethiopian Jew in the similitude of ethnic substantives in Acts 2:8-11. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, 141, n. 119.

⁸¹⁰ *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros*, ed. by L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner (Leiden: Brill, 1958), 668. For a detailed discussion of סָרִיס, see Hayim Tadmor, ‘Was the Biblical *Sārîs* a Eunuch?’, in *Solving Riddles and Untying Knots: Biblical, Epigraphic, and Semitic Studies in Honor of Jonas C. Greenfield*, ed. by Ziony

castrated one' with the later Greek translation, εὐνοῦχος, although generally the primary meaning tended to take precedence.⁸¹¹ Even if Pao were correct, there is no reason to suggest that Luke dismissed the ethnoreligious identity of the eunuch, never mind his socio-political and socioeconomic status. On the contrary, Luke's discursive strategy deliberately keeps the eunuch's full intersectionality in place. That is why he introduces the 'intersectionality' in the way that he does with the hanging, independent nominative clause in 8:27: (καὶ ἰδοὺ) ἄνθρωπος Αἰθίοψ εὐνοῦχος δυνάστης – a reference to gender, race, sexuality and class respectively. His subsequent reference to the African as eunuch is therefore best viewed as an intersectional anaphoric reference.

The point here is that 'eunuch' and 'δυνάστης' serve distinctly different literary functions. Even if Luke had not mentioned that the eunuch was a δυνάστης of the treasury of Candace's dominion, for example, the dynamics of the actual narrative would have socially located him as a member of the elite. Δυνάστης is the specific job description of a treasury officer. In which case, it would be the job title of a high-ranking eunuch. Without convivially seeing the African's subjectivity as a whole, would mean to miss the many and significant nuances of the story. Luke expects his readership to anticipate that the Ethiopian eunuch's independent reading of the text would bring hope not merely in terms of restoration but of reclamation.

Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that before the interpretative intervention of Philip, the Ethiopian eunuch's community would have already invested in the eschatological promise of the humiliation-exaltation reversal of fortune embedded in this section of the scroll. It was a personal reflexive moment,

Zevit, Seymour Gitin, and Michael Sokoloff (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 317–25.

⁸¹¹ Francois P. Retief and Louise Cilliers, 'Eunuchs in the Bible', *Acta Theologica* 7: Supplementum (2005): 247–258.

particularly for the eunuch, whose body could possibly have been construed in this way. What he was unsure about, however, was of whom Isaiah 53 spoke as the agent of change.

In this sense of hope, the devotionally reading act was not merely reflexive for pedagogical information⁸¹² but, as argued in the previous chapter, when convivially considered, for psychagogical soul and community formation. This was because this devotional reading was an oral performance of a sacred oracle, on a sacred pilgrimage. Then the performativity of the enunciation of the word as sacral practice would be understood, as established in chapter 3, to have power to form lives. This would have a psychagogical bearing on those conjoined in the sacral act of pilgrimage and reading. In effect, as noted by Pao, “the goal of this journey [of the traveling of the powerful word in the narrative of Acts would be] to create the ‘community of the word’”.⁸¹³ But the ‘community of the word’ would be the community of changed lives. Thus, considering the function of psychagogy as facilitated by the dialogue between Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch on the ‘word of God’, yet in the spirit of pilgrimage, the carnivalesque lens of conviviality might enable seeing and hearing their conversation differently – i.e., as a meeting of minds in exchange of interpretative traditions, a crossing of systemic borders and an exchange of deep communal hospitality.

Seeing and hearing the conversation in terms of a meeting of minds in exchange of interpretative traditions mean conceptualising it as a way of one communal

⁸¹² Medieval authors in their logocentricity tended to privilege literary or verbal comprehension as the primary means for personal, spiritual advancement. See, for example, the instantiation of the citation of the Ethiopian eunuch’s story by the fourth-fifth century Church Father, Jerome: “Then Philip came and showed him Jesus, who was concealed beneath the letter” (Jerome, *Letters* 53:5). Cf. the sixteenth century, Bishop John Jewel of Salisbury in Charles Webb Le Bas, *The Life of Bishop Jewel* (London: J.G. & F. Rivington, 1835), 307; for the body of the text, see John Jewel, *The Works of John Jewel*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1847), 2:594. Augustine is another example. He was reputedly converted by text (Augustine, *Confessions* 8.12.29).

⁸¹³ Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, 250.

reading meeting another for progressive, mutual exchange. This is the second characteristic of *κολλάομαι* to be explored. The reciprocity of reading traditions and interpretations is constitutive of the hospitality offered, even if shared along hierarchical lines. To suggest otherwise, however, has as much to do with assumptions about (a) the Ethiopian eunuch's religious identity, (b) a Cartesian epistemological reading of his conversation and (c) his status. We will deal with these in turn.

(a) The Ethiopian eunuch's religious identity. It is fallacious to suppose that the Ethiopian eunuch had nothing to offer to the conversation, that he is reading *tabula rasa*. Then his reply in Acts 8:31 would amount to, "I have no idea what the text is talking about; I am undone unless someone shows me!" To suppose this is to assume that he was not a Jew and consequently did not have a psychagogical relationship with the Torah or other Jewish writings as means of spiritual formation and theology. But he is not ignorant, as a Gentile identity might presume.⁸¹⁴ He is after all reading intelligently, and thereby contributing and respectfully (and worshipfully) submitting to the will of the sacred text. This is the position that Irenaeus held, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, leading him to conclude that the Ethiopian eunuch's prior knowledge of and experiential investment in Judaism and its traditions predisposed him to comprehend more readily the gospel and thereby welcome Philip's witness of it. The Ethiopian eunuch is assumed to be a Jew. Therefore, the impasse which he came to in his reading was precipitated not by sheer ignorance but more likely a dissonance, possibly caused by something he experienced during his time in Jerusalem. Given that the story comes post-Pentecost (Acts 2) possibly by a few years and, if Luke's

⁸¹⁴ Anne-Louise Eriksson, 'Do You Understand What You Are Reading? Faith, Tradition and Theological Literacy', *Studia Theologica - Nordic Journal of Theology* 64.2 (2010): 149. Eriksson holds that the Ethiopian eunuch could not understand.

meta-story line is chronologically viable,⁸¹⁵ then before the conversation of Paul in Acts 9, contestations of Jesus’s messianic identity could still have been fermenting. The Ethiopian eunuch’s preoccupation with the identity of the subject of Isaiah 53:7-8 could indeed be part of a spill over of pilgrimage conversations in Jerusalem. In fact, when Luke attests that Philip shared with the Ethiopian eunuch the good news of Jesus, he stipulates that Philip did this, “beginning from this scripture” (ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ τῆς γραφῆς ταύτης), assuming that the Ethiopian eunuch was consummately *au fait* with a Hebrew messianic narrative, identified Isaiah as a prophet and submitted to the authority of the Hebrew scriptures as sacred text. Otherwise, the ‘bible study’ would have made very little sense.

(b) A Cartesian epistemological reading of his conversation. How we conceptualise the conversation of our text has as much to do with assumptions about a Cartesian reading of Luke’s perspective of the Ethiopian eunuch’s epistemology. Luke omits whatever pleasantries that might have preceded the substance of the conversation embarked upon by the Ethiopian eunuch and Philip in Acts 8. He begins with Philip’s attitude. Philip has not privileged his new Jesus tradition as normative in the institutionalised sense of the word. Yes, it is instrumental in this frontier meeting given his missional intent (8:26). It will subvert traditional Jewish interpretations of messianic expectation. Therefore, he is positioned in the conversation as engaging the aristocratic (δυνάστης) African by showing interest in the reading act. He humbly asks, Ἄρα γε γινώσκεις ἃ ἀναγινώσκεις; [“Do you actually know what you’re reading?”]⁸¹⁶ or have you

⁸¹⁵ Benjamin Wing Wo Fung argues forcefully for a chronological order in Luke’s Gospel by use of the word, καθέξῃσις (Luke 1:3), and suggests that “it is reasonable to believe that it has not changed as compared to that of his Gospel” – Benjamin Wing Wo Fung, *A Defense for the Chronological Order of Luke’s Gospel: The Meaning of ‘Orderly’ (Kathexēs) Account in Luke 1:3* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2019), 34.

⁸¹⁶ Ἄρα γε is an emphatic interrogative particle, yielding the notion of ‘actually’ and anticipating a negative

ascertained [the deeper meaning of] what you are reading yet? (Acts 8:30).

Humbly, because of the *hysteron proteron* play on words of γινώσκεις ἃ ἀναγινώσκεις, lending phonological elegance to his solicitation. In so doing, he is politely, not arrogantly, offering to engage in dialogue.

The question is moreover respectful because the epistemology that framed this question is one that privileges spirituality and revelation above empirical, scientific knowledge. The latter is normally given a high premium as intellectual knowledge accessible via rationality and logic.⁸¹⁷ This amounts to a Cartesian epistemology and did not rank in the same way in antiquity.⁸¹⁸ It is hermeneutically tempting to view this question in terms of Euromodernity's valorisation of the Cartesian ideology of empirical knowledge – an approach that is currently a hegemonic epistemology. In effect, if rational knowledge acquisition was ranked the highest value in life, then Philip's question to the aristocratic African would have been deemed incredible at best or an insult at worst. Incredibly extraneous, because the question would have suggested that he was ignorant in something of basic 'data' value outside the epistemological norm. An insult, because it would have had the illocutionary force of hubris, implying

response – “Do you actually know...”

⁸¹⁷ For a way of advancing a hermeneutic beyond mere rationality and logic see Jürgen Moltmann, 'Do You Understand What You Are Reading? New Testament Scholarship and the Hermeneutical Question of Theology', *Theology* 113 (2010): 83–95. Moltmann's appeal is for a hermeneutic that reconciles the historical and theological approach to understanding the biblical text. However, his argument understandably privileges a cognitive-rational pursuit to understanding.

⁸¹⁸ N.K. Gottwald's caution is helpful here: “We live in the aftermath of the Cartesian and Kantian break-ups of the metaphysical and epistemological harmony and unity of perception. We likewise live in the wake of the Hegelian and Marxian departures from ahistoricism and from nonprocessual understandings of the human condition. We are unable to appropriate the powerful religious symbolism out of early Israel in any other way than as moderns for whom radically new techno-economic and social-relational conditions have made us, willingly or not, heirs of the Cartesian-Kantian and Hegelian-Marxian dissolutions of the static, hierarchically layered unity of reality”, Norman K. Gottwald, *Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250-1050 BCE* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 704.

with the question, ‘do you understand what you’re reading?’ that the African knows nothing.

However, given the epistemological preeminence of spirituality, revelation and wisdom in antiquity and the immense stature of the Ethiopian eunuch, questions about knowledge would have been construed in terms of transcendent spirituality, in terms of connecting with the ultimate value of wisdom. Hence, simply on the honour-shame spectrum, the question of rational knowledge rated quite low. Instead, this was a question in light of the impressive stature of the Ethiopian eunuch – to which we will return later – his pilgrimage and his psychagogically devotional study of Isaiah 53. Thus, the question sought a response framed within the epistemology of spirituality and revelation, yet in deference to his elitist stature. It had the illocutionary force of an indirect offer, and should therefore be heard in the spirit of: ‘does this makes sense to you?’ or ‘if you’re having difficulty with reconceptualising this’, – later the Ethiopian eunuch asks whether the scriptural passage under reflection is about Isaiah or someone else (Acts 8: 34) – ‘then I’d be happy to help, if you don’t mind, of course’. In which case, it would have been received with intrigue, since Philip as suggested in the previous chapter might have been welcomed as a psychagogue, a spiritual guide.

(c) The Ethiopian eunuch’s status. The convivial exchange presents the Ethiopian eunuch as the high-status man, an elite (δυνάστης) who is highly educated and, as alluded to above, eminently spiritual. For example, in 8:31, Luke has the Ethiopian commanding an eloquent utility of the *lingua franca* Greek⁸¹⁹ by employing the unusual optative mood (δυναίμην from δύναμαι),⁸²⁰ when he asks,

⁸¹⁹ It was usual for elites to be fluently multilingual. See Rachel Mairs, “Bilingualism,” *EAH*, 29.

⁸²⁰ James Hope Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek: The Prolegomena*, 3rd ed., 5 vols (T&T Clark, 2000), 1:197–99.

“πῶς γὰρ ἂν δυνάμην ἐὰν μή τις ὁδηγήσει⁸²¹ με;” (How might I be able to, unless someone guides me?) This sophistication does not merely highlight the eunuch’s education, and Luke’s accomplished penmanship but a notable slant to an appreciative literary patron and audience. Philip is invited onto the pilgrimage convoy as a guest (v. 31*b*, a fellow traveller, a pilgrim, albeit, an enlightened one). He is not presented in the discourse as a host. He is not a custodian of a centre of orthodoxy, in the way that he might be deemed in the previous stories in Samaria, where his orthopraxy is authenticated by the arrival of Peter and John (8:14-15). Although his character is a thick one, filled out by his own commissioning in Acts 6 and missional witness in Samaria (8:4-25), Philip beseeches the knowledge of the Ethiopian eunuch (8:30). More to the point, Luke’s rhetorical discourse foregrounds the Ethiopian eunuch as the one with the authority and balance of power, probably because of his high societal status.

The Ethiopian eunuch is handing out instructions: “How can I know, unless someone guides me?” – a backhanded way of entreating and thereby permitting Philip to take the lead; he invites or beckons (παρεκάλεσέν) Philip to come aboard his chariot and sit with him (καθίσαι σὺν αὐτῷ); he takes the initiative to be baptised – “τί κωλύει με βαπτισθῆναι; (What is preventing me from being baptised?)”;⁸²² and, he orders the convoy to stop – ἐκέλευσεν στῆναι τὸ ἄρμα.

⁸²¹ Normally, the verb in the protasis (which takes ἐὰν) of a third-class conditional statement is in the subjective mood in agreement with the preposition, ἐὰν. Thus, it should read ὁδηγήσῃ as attested by the MSS, \mathfrak{P}^{74} A B² L Ψ 81. 323 et. al., \mathfrak{M} . Instead, the future indicative, ὁδηγήσει, is used as attested to by \mathfrak{P}^{50} \mathfrak{X} B* C E 6. 614. 1175. Stanley Porter suggests “that the future and the subjunctive verb forms often appear in similar environments, especially in conditional and relative clauses”. However, he goes on to emphasise that, “the future form seems to carry with it a higher degree of expectation for fulfilment regarding the action”. See Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Sheffield: Continuum, 2005), 45. A. T. Robertson, on the other hand, states that future indicative is probably just a variation of the aorist subjunctive – A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar*, 924–5; cf. Moulton, *A Grammar*, 1:149. In fact, there are other uses of ἐὰν with the indicative in the NT: 1 Thess. 3:8, 1 John 5:15, Luke 19:40. L W Ledgerwood III suggests that this evolving shift from subjective to indicative with ἐὰν might be reflective of syntactical shifts in the development of the language – L. W. Ledgerwood III, ‘What Does the Greek First Class Conditional Imply? Gricean Methodology and the Testimony of the Ancient Greek Grammarians’, *Grace Theological Journal* 12.1 (1992): 117, n. 35.

⁸²² By way of contrast, it is Peter who is doing the ordering in the Cornelius’s conversion story, where he

Altogether, the Ethiopian eunuch is literarily foregrounded and positioned hierarchically in the discourse as sitting in the driving seat. He begins as the host, in that he invites Philip to join him. Yet, he does not indulge their conversation as a host. He yields and enters the mutual conviviality as a guest. A host/traveller becomes a guest of a guest. A pilgrim welcomes a guest as a fellow pilgrim. Their diasporic space forms a new attachment to the decentring, neutralising desert road, which, as we have already seen, provides an analytical framework for their new belonging, solidarity and identification. This is where a new biblical tradition is meeting an old one – one from which Philip himself had possibly moved.

In sum, the above treatment of the aforementioned three assumptions about the Ethiopian eunuch's religious identity, the Cartesian epistemological reading of his conversation and his status demonstrates that it is possible to read the encounter between the Ethiopian eunuch and Philip as a meeting of spiritual minds where one communal reading meets another for progressive, mutual exchange. This convivial reading is the third characteristic of *κολλάομαι*. Moreover, it too is constitutive of the hospitality offered by the Ethiopian eunuch in our story. In other words, *κολλάομαι* as a verb of Pentecostal hospitality serves as a common denominator of its two characteristic functions of a mutual, progressive sharing of traditions and a crossing of transgressive, systemic borders. To demonstrate this further will require returning to the conversation between the Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch.

Firstly, Philip is noted in dialectic conversation with the Ethiopian eunuch as a guest. This is indicated by the reply of the Ethiopian eunuch, who answers Philip's question with a question: Πῶς γὰρ ἂν δυναίμην ἐὰν μή τις ὁδηγήσει με;

asks if anything is preventing (*κωλύσαι*) Cornelius and his household from being baptised (Acts 10:47).

[“How can I (know) unless someone guides me?”] (8:31a). Some of the peculiar syntax of this question has already been addressed. What is of further significance, however, is that this question is constituted by two different classes of conditional clauses. The first clause, Πῶς γὰρ ἂν δυναίμην, is the apodosis of a fourth-class conditional statement, while the second clause, ἐὰν μή τις ὁδηγήσῃ με, is the protasis of a third-class conditional statement or, because an indicative is used instead of a subjunctive, some may prefer a first-class conditional.⁸²³ Whereas a fourth-class conditional statement denotes a possible condition in the future, even though it is usually a remote possibility,⁸²⁴ the third denotes a probable condition in the future.⁸²⁵ Since 8:31a contains two classes of conditions – fourth-class apodosis and third-class protasis – this kind of sentence is sometimes referred to as a mixed conditional sentence. In effect, it denotes that the Ethiopian eunuch is beseeching, “[Protasis:] Unless someone offers to guide me (will you?), [Apodosis:] there is little possibility of me understanding this.” He is indirectly inviting Philip to honour the initial implied offer, but he is not presumptuous about it. Effectively, he is extending an indirect invitation to Philip’s indirect offer.

There is a convivial tone of light-hearted witticism here, where, in Burton’s sense of the carnivalesque, honour and reputation are being protected. First, in Philip’s lyrical *hysteron proteron*, γινώσκεις ἃ ἀναγινώσκεις; and second, in the eunuch’s diffident reply, “[apodosis:] I don’t know ... [protasis:] do you have something to say?”⁸²⁶ – all in an effort to protect the honour of both the evangelist and the

⁸²³ See, for example, A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar*, 1022; A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament: Acts of the Apostles* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1933), 3:67.

⁸²⁴ For the record, there are no complete examples of fourth-class conditional sentences in the New Testament. Instead, there are partial fourth-class conditional clauses as part of mixed conditional sentences: 1 Pet 3:14; 3:17; Acts 24:19 and 1 Cor 15:37.

⁸²⁵ For more information on conditional clauses in the New Testament, see Daniel B. Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax: An Intermediate Greek Grammar* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 308–15.

⁸²⁶ This exchange in conversation may be compared with that of Cornelius’ and Peter’s (Acts 10:29), where

African statesman. In this way, their convivial witticism predisposes the Ethiopian eunuch to show hospitality towards Philip and permits an exchange, probably characterised by a similar tone of conviviality, which allows an old tradition to give way to a new Christocentric one. *Κολλάομαι* as a verb of Pentecostal hospitality is here facilitating a joining in terms of a mutual, progressive sharing of traditions. It is a pilgrimage after all, where the conviviality of openness and mutual curiosity is characteristically endogenous to communally sacred journeying. But, as mentioned before, *κολλάομαι* also facilitates the crossing of transgressive, systemic borders.

Secondly, the way *κολλάομαι* facilitates the crossing of borders is best seen in revisiting the discursive distribution of power between Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. As noted above, the playful interchange in their conversation differently positions Philip in the discourse in terms of power. He is in literary terms ‘waiting upon’ the Ethiopian eunuch. The discursive preeminence of the Ethiopian eunuch comes at the behest of his introduction in 8:27, where he is established by the discourse as an elite aristocrat of nobility (as indicated by the literary marker of *δυνάστης*). Much about his nobility, yet otherness, could well appear to be transgressive to Philip – especially, his class as a wealthy nobleman; his stature as an African warrior, as connoted by his chariot – *ἄρμα* is either a war

after an exchange of pleasantries (Acts 10:25-28), Peter, ‘as if already having an idea of why he is invited by Cornelius, enquires, “For what reason, may I enquire, have you called for me?” (10:29). This rhetorical flourish is reminiscent of the initial exchange (the risen) Jesus had with the two men on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:17 – which is part of the longer pericope, 24:13-35) during pilgrimage season. Jesus ‘as if’ disingenuously humouring them asks, “What are you two talking about?” (24:17). Humouring, because their reply assumes that Jesus was listening to their conversation and thus heard the subject matter. Disingenuously, because Jesus is pretending ‘as if’ he knows little about what they are talking about. ‘As if’ slightly agitated, Cleopas retorts that he must be “the only one in Jerusalem who doesn’t know” what is going on (24:18). This insinuation of “where have you been?” is not meant to insult Jesus but is an elaborate rhetorical foil to engage further in conversation. Jesus then snaps back, “what sort of things?” (24:19). Jesus’s question does not presume that they know nothing. On the contrary, the narrator and reader know that Jesus is using the question also as a foil to engage further with the men. This gentle banter between Jesus and the pilgrims is carnivalesque in the sense of Goto’s ‘as if’.

or travel chariot,⁸²⁷ which either way, given the status of the Ethiopian eunuch, would have been a sizable chariot; his priestly bearing, as will be established later; and possibly his sexuality as a eunuch. In short, his intersectional status in terms of socioeconomics, politics, ethnoreligion and gender (to which one might add sexuality) as disability amounts to a complex, composite borderline identity. This is the transgressive, systemic border that Philip crosses.

Given Philip's disparity in status, he would be loath to join the caravan by automatically assuming entitlement as a psychagogue. He could not assume such hubris. He instead is presented as seeking an opportunity to share. Thus, the carnivalesque gesture (play acting) towards him allows Philip an opening to be joined to someone valorised as constituting a higher yet threatening status, without the Ethiopian eunuch losing face. The hospitable exchange enjoins Philip as a witness, but now a fellow pilgrim though transgressive trespasser, to be opened to listening, learning, exchanging, joining and crossing. No wonder he later obliges the directive of the Ethiopian eunuch and baptises him. His pedagogical exchange is in agonistic dialecticism with the Ethiopian eunuch.

But the Ethiopian eunuch has crossing to do himself. Philip earnestly explains that the text finds fulfilment in Jesus – ἀνοίξας δὲ ὁ Φίλιππος τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ... εὐηγγελίσατο αὐτῷ τὸν Ἰησοῦν [and when he opened his mouth⁸²⁸... he shared with him the good news about Jesus], (8:35). Yet, Jesus does not appear to be necessarily a complete stranger to the Ethiopian eunuch.⁸²⁹ In effect, in light of

⁸²⁷ *LSJ*, ἄρμα, 242. Incidentally, Smith tenders that the Ethiopian eunuch was possibly a military figure because of the way he is introduced as an official of Candace and the proximity of the parallel conversion story of the Centurion in Acts 10. Luke's audience could have conceivably regarded both figures together within a military trope. See Smith, 'Do You Understand What You Are Reading?', 66, 68.

⁸²⁸ ἀνοίξας, from ἀνοίγω, usually indicates authoritative speech.

⁸²⁹ The possible familiarity of Jesus could account for Smith's observation that Acts 8:26–40 should be also considered as one of the recognition scenes in Luke-Acts: "In Acts 8:26-40, the mention of the prophet Isaiah, the act of reading, the presence of the Spirit, the use of a book, the emphasis on foreigners – all remind the authorial audience of the Nazareth scene where the Spirit-filled Jesus reads from Isaiah the

Isaiah 52-56, the text not only served as an apologetic for Jesus as the fulfilled messiah, but as a prophetic text of eschatological fulfilment. The renewal of the Ethiopian eunuch's 'faith' journey was not only an initiation into the Jesus way, it was an initiation into a newly anticipated eschatological way. The Ethiopian eunuch was being introduced to a new Christocentric paradigm of imagining the climactic *telos* of the world.

The Ethiopian eunuch accepts the Christocentric reading of the Isaianic prophecy. He accepts Jesus as both the messiah (τὸν [...] Χριστόν, Acts 8:37 – Western reading) and fulfilment of his (Hebrew) tradition, the tradition that he brings to the experience of the prophetic text. Luke's emphasis of Isaiah 53:7-8 is manifestly to project the humiliation-exaltation experience of Jesus Christ, a pattern which is a feature of Luke's writing (Luke 1:52; 3:5-6; 5:12-26; 14:11; 18:9-14, 24:25-27).⁸³⁰ This language of reversal of fortunes could well have had rhetorical impact on the Ethiopian eunuch, otherwise he would not be spiritually compelled by it. His psychagogical submission to this theme is reflective of his regard for the sacred text, for Hebrew scripture and for his pilgrimage. His identity with Isaiah as a prophet, not only supports the observation of his regard for the Isaiah scroll as scripture but is indicative of his familiarity with a Hebrew messianic tradition.⁸³¹ His reading of the text already highlights his interpretation of the passage to be prophetic of the Jewish messiah. His communal tradition is already inscribed with a messianic tradition. It is this communal reading tradition that meets and gives way to Philip's communal reading tradition. The Ethiopian

prophet and announces a ministry of beneficence toward all persons, including Gentiles (Lk 4:16-30)", Smith, 'Do You Understand What You Are Reading?', 62-3.

⁸³⁰ See Spencer, *The Portrait of Philip in Acts*, 179, for a further development of this theme.

⁸³¹ There is no reason to deny that the Ethiopian eunuch may have identified the suffering servant with the Davidic Messiah of Isaiah 11, especially in light of 11:11-12, which identifies the diasporic Jews of Cush to be reclaimed on the eschatological 'day of the Lord'. Neither does his reading of the Isaiah scroll obviate the possibility of him being acquainted with other Messianic traditions, such as the 'Son of Man' in Daniel 7:13.

eunuch's yielding through baptism is his transgressive crossing over across a new Christocentric systemic border of emancipatory proportions.

Yet, it is Philip who leaves changed. Virginia Burrus is correct to make this observation when assessing the passage.⁸³² Her deduction is made from the “rather bizarre concluding twist” of the story where it posits the Spirit of the Lord (Acts 8:39) – the Western reading insists it is the angel of the Lord – catching up Philip and transporting him to another town. Philip leaves the Ethiopian eunuch to work out his own life interpretation or lived experience in light of the Ethiopian eunuch's anointing of the Holy Spirit (8:39, Western reading). The Ethiopian eunuch's conversion to The Way is effectively an opening to his indigenisation of the Way. Philip does not export a cultic tradition to the Ethiopian eunuch beyond that of baptism into the Way of Jesus Christ. Neither is the Ethiopian eunuch captive to issues of Jewish cultic orthodoxy as prescribed by Jerusalem, as Cornelius and subsequent Gentiles in Acts would be. The Ethiopian eunuch's subsequent commissioning by the Holy Spirit is sufficiently an initiation for the Ethiopian eunuch's self-expression of a renewed (messianic) Hebrew tradition. He and his pilgrim entourage are spiritually renewed.

In the previous chapter, it was noted that ἡ ὁδός, which is invoked three times in our story (Acts 8:26, 36, 39), serves as a double entendre conceptual tool for conveying the missional plot of Acts: one, indicating a literal road that leads southwards towards Gaza *en route* to Ethiopia, and, two, indicating the proto-Christian's designation of ‘The Way’ and that its growth or expansion is about to enter the systemic crossing of empires – Rome in the north and Ethiopia in the south. In support of the latter, Pao's postulate of The Way as a literary tool for

⁸³² Virginia Burrus, ‘The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles’, in *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*, ed. by Fernando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 150.

the Isaianic New Exodus is helpful. He correctly demonstrates how in Isaiah 40-55 the term ‘Way’ (דרך) evoked the Exodus tradition, by recasting the national story of Israel’s liberation into the new eschatological people of God. This, he argues, forms the impetus for Luke’s deployment of The Way in Acts 9:2; 18:25; 19:9; 22:4 & 24:14. Feeding Pao’s postulate into the missional role of ἡ ὁδός in Acts 8:26-40, where it serves as a double-entendre-conceptual-tool, could indicate that the exodus motif runs through the pilgrimage story. The pilgrimage re-enacts the journey through the desert – a harsh, uncompromising, deserted and uninhabited place – during which the Hebrew people were being purified and ready for the covenant at Sinai. This sojourn motif continued with the pilgrims’ encounter with Philip in a decentring desert place of the Sinaitic Peninsula. It is a movement from bondage (impurity) to freedom (purity), facilitating baptism (8:36). This freedom is expressed in terms of the rejoicing of the Ethiopian eunuch upon his departure to Ethiopia – “ἐπορεύετο γὰρ τὴν ὁδὸν αὐτοῦ χαίρων [for he went on his way rejoicing]” (8:39). Hence, though overlooked by Pao – possibly because ἡ ὁδός for him principally serves as a proto-Christianity identity appellative of ‘The Way’ in 9:2; 18:25; 19:9; 22:4; 24:14, whereas in 8:26, 36, 39 it primarily denotes a ‘road’ – the missional role of ἡ ὁδός in Acts 8:26-40, serving as a conceptual tool, may allusionally facilitate the Isaianic exodus motif of an African being restored and reclaimed.

In sum, a convivial literary reading of the conversation between the Ethiopian eunuch and Philip contests a Cartesian epistemology. It helps us to see that the Ethiopian eunuch was a highly learned man, of noble social standing, who was engaged on a pilgrimage of reflexive, communal reading, which, because of the Isaiah text, consolidated his place and agency in the eschatological promise of the restorative humiliation-exaltation reversal of fortune extended to all eunuchs, and confirmed for his reading community the reclamation of all Cushite Jews from the far-flung reaches of the diaspora. *Κολλάομαι*, the hospitality verb of

Pentecostal joining, sees his honourable and complex intersectional standing not as a deterrent to Philip, but focusses his devoted communal reading as an invitation to Philip's charm offensive. Philip, accepting the hospitality offered, crosses the Ethiopian eunuch's systemic, even transgressive border, where his joining opens up the African to confess Jesus as the Messiah (8:37, Western MSS) and join (and possibly indigenise) the restorative and reclamational exodus of The Way.⁸³³

4.2.1.6 Baptism

Pilgrimage was seen as a means of purification especially when tied to festivals. It was a purification rite, since to enter the temple one had to be ritually pure.⁸³⁴ Moreover, people like the Qumran sect of Judaism linked the purification trope to baptism (1QS V, 13–14). It was seen as a mark of repentance, thereby avowing one's covenant commitment. Given the reference to baptism in our story but framed within a pilgrimage – albeit on a return journey⁸³⁵ – it is conceivable,

⁸³³ A convivial optic that epistemologically recognises an Afroasiatic pilgrimage as framing the Ethiopian eunuch pericope is critical to intervening in interpretations that maintain a Cartesian epistemology no matter how creative they are. Mitzi Smith's chapter entitled, 'Epistemologies, Pedagogies, and the Subordinated Other: Luke's Parallel Construction of the Ethiopian Eunuch and the Alexandrian Apollos (Acts 8:26–40; 18:24–28) in Mitzi J. Smith, *Womanist Sass and Talk Back: Social (In)Justice, Intersectionality, and Biblical Interpretation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018), 46–69, is a case in point. With respect to the Ethiopian eunuch, Smith creatively argues through Womanist lens how as one subordinated, he is witnessed to by a subordinated non-apostle, Philip (pp. 48–49). Hence, synecdochically, a double marginalisation is resulted, where the religious centre of Ethiopia is subordinated to and conquered by 'The Way' (p. 47). However, failing to frame the pericope as an Afroasiatic sacred pilgrimage – characterised by a wisdom/spiritual epistemology, collectivism, convivial hospitality, psychagogical formation, a reciprocity of reading traditions and opening for the indigenisation of 'The Way' – will almost inevitably mis-characterise the conversation between the (God-fearing, p. 48) Ethiopian eunuch and (the Jewish, p. 50) Philip as a one-way, univocal indoctrination (p. 53) of a knowledge-deficit (or ignorant, p. 52) African man. Smith situates his subordination in the broader subordination of 'the Other' in Acts. See Mitzi J. Smith, *The Literary Construction of the Other in the Acts of the Apostles: Charismatics, the Jews, and Women* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock/Pickwick, 2015), 136–143.

⁸³⁴ Susan Haber, 'Going Up to Jerusalem: Pilgrimage, Purity, the Historical Jesus', in *Travel and Religion in Antiquity*, ed. by Philip A. Harland, Studies in Christianity and Judaism, 21 (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 64.

⁸³⁵ While the location of the Ethiopian eunuch's baptism cannot be absolutely certain, Fred Horton and Jeffrey Blakely have argued that E. Robinson's 1838 postulate that it was Tell el-Hesi appears to be convincing. See Fred L Horton and Jeffrey A Blakely, "Behold, Water!" Tell El-Hesi and the Baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-40)', *Revue Biblique* 107.1 (2000): 56–71.

notwithstanding the historical precedence of baptism as a symbol for purification,⁸³⁶ that the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch was not only a ratification of his confession of Jesus as Saviour and thereby his conversion to the Jesus Way, but a psychagogically acceptance of the humiliation-exaltation reversal of fortune indicated by the Suffering Servant text in Acts 8:32-33. Viewed convivially, baptism functions beyond the formulaic, initiation rite that the Western text of 8:37c suggests.⁸³⁷ It fits well in a pilgrimage discourse as a means of rededicating one's life for the next phase of one's spiritual journey. The Ethiopian eunuch's conversion to the Jesus Way adduces such a decision. He, then, need not have seen his baptism as a total break from his Hebrew heritage, but as a new development of his Hebrew faith.

Since the Ethiopian eunuch's baptism came as a result of his psychagogical exchange of readings with Philip, it should be seen as evidence of not only a deep conviction, but a deep sharing of hospitality. In which case, Philip's guidance is 'soul forming': ἀνοίξας δὲ ὁ Φίλιππος τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ τῆς γραφῆς ταύτης εὐηγγελίσσατο αὐτῷ τὸν Ἰησοῦν (and when he opened his mouth,⁸³⁸ beginning with this scripture he shared with him the good news about Jesus, v. 35). Εὐηγγελίσσατο could be construed, then, as a verb of psychagogy. Then Philip's sharing would not be merely to impart information but to lead

⁸³⁶ See the Second Temple texts of Sirach 34:30; Judith 12:7. According to m. Pes 8.8, b. Ker 9a, b. Yeb 46a the Jewish practice of baptism as a rite for conversion to Judaism arguably preceded 70 CE by some years. Some scholars see Jewish proselyte baptism as the source for John the Baptist's baptism, for example. See Thomas F Torrance, 'Proselyte Baptism', *NTS* 1.2 (1954): 150–154; John Heron, 'The Theology of Baptism', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 8.1 (1955): 36–52; H. H. Rowley, 'Jewish Proselyte Baptism and the Baptism of John', *Hebrew Union College Annual* 15 (1940): 313–334; Émil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*. 3 vols (London; New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 3:173–74. However, this is overwhelmingly disputed. See, Joshua Kulp, 'The Participation of a Court in the Jewish Conversion Process', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 94.3 (2004): 437–470; Adela Yarbro Collins, 'The Origin of Christian Baptism', *Studia Liturgica* 19.1 (1989): 28–46.

⁸³⁷ Acts 8:37 "And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

⁸³⁸ "ἀνοίξας [...] τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ" is a Semitic idiom, indicating an authoritative pronouncement efficacious for heedfulness.

devotionally the shaping of the soul of the Ethiopian eunuch. Such an approach would be efficacious for the type of commitment baptism signifies. Yet baptism serves as the ultimate trope for mutual joining. 8:39 states that they both came out of the water seemingly together — one does not precede the other as in 8:38, where Philip precedes the Ethiopian eunuch — ὅτε δὲ ἀνέβησαν ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος [Once they came up out of the water]. Both emerge as joined.

Yet, given his collectivist predisposition, his baptism as a baptism into the Jesus Way is a baptism into community. Most likely, as much as the text as a cultural production allows, the community way is not (yet) an institutionalised way. Acts 8 is still fairly early in the development of the new Jewish sect, The Way. In which case, a systematised cultic formation that was uniquely different to that of mainstream Jews had not yet been instituted. It is probably the case, moreover, that something from this event was bequeathed to the Ethiopian eunuch: the Isaiah text would possibly now serve as an apologetic for explaining Jesus as the goal of eschatological hopes, and baptism as a catechism model for the regeneration of one's Jewish (eschatological) journey.

4.2.1.7 An Anointing

A further literary signifier is pertinent to the pilgrimage. This is the longer Western recension of Acts 8:39. The textual history of the two major recensions of Acts has already been referred to in chapter 3 in preparation for this discussion. 8:39 effectively points to a crucial piece of evidence that denotes the Ethiopian eunuch's own Pentecost. It also indicates the plausibility of the Ethiopian eunuch being a signal witness in his homeland, Ethiopia. It is quite possible in the very least, that an early Christian community conversant with the Western texts celebrated the plausibility that the eunuch departed with missiological intent, as is later evident in Irenaeus's claim that the Ethiopian eunuch was the first missionary "to the regions of Ethiopia" (*AH* 3.12.8 in *ANF*

1.433), which Eusebius later endorses (*Church History* 2.1.13). The longer variant reading of the Holy Spirit falling upon the eunuch⁸³⁹ before sending him on his way rejoicing (8:39) is probably efficacious of an anointing and a departing with intent, missiological intent.⁸⁴⁰ This reading is, however, not without controversy, not least because of the later argument in the early church that debated whether the castrated eunuch can be ordained or serve at the altar.⁸⁴¹ As was learned earlier in chapter 2, Augustine was clear about the Ethiopian eunuch receiving the Holy Spirit. A closer look at the evidence might suffice.

The preferred reading of Acts 8:39b by NA²⁸ is the shorter Alexandrian reading: πνεῦμα κυρίου ἥρπασεν τὸν Φίλιππον (The Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away).⁸⁴² The longer Western reading, however, has an insertion in between πνεῦμα and κυρίου in terms of the following (and I will include both words, πνεῦμα and κυρίου for ease of reading): πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐπέπεσεν ἐπὶ τὸν εὐνοῦχον ἄγγελος δὲ κυρίου... (the Holy Spirit fell upon the eunuch and the angel of the Lord...). This rendering has the angel (not the Holy Spirit) snatching the Ethiopian eunuch away, providing a literary *inclusio* to 8:26, “when the angel of the Lord spoke to Philip”.

The longer Western reading is supported by the usual suspects of witnesses – the Coptic versions, the Armenian and Georgian versions, the Harclean Syriac

⁸³⁹ See A^c 323. 453. 945. 1739. 1891. 2818 / 1178 it^{ar}, l, p, (w) vg^{mss} (p w sy^{h**}) mae arm geo slav Jerome^{1/2}

⁸⁴⁰ By anointing is meant the reception of the Holy Spirit as at Pentecost in Acts 2.

⁸⁴¹ For a discussion on the conditions for eunuchs serving in a higher position see, Louis Herbert Gray, ‘Eunuch’, ed. by James Hastings and John Alexander Selbie, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1908), 583.

⁸⁴² UBS⁵ attests to this reading mainly on theological grounds: “(a) to make explicit that the baptism of the Ethiopian was followed by the gift of the Holy Spirit, and (b) to confirm the account of Philip’s departure to that of his commission (by the angel of the Lord, v. 26)”. See Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 360 (Acts 8:39-40). While I hold the theological inferences to be true, I do for different reasons.

version⁸⁴³ – though the principal, Codex Bezae (D), comes of short.⁸⁴⁴ In addition, and perhaps more controversially, the codex Alexandrinus (A^c) bears witness to this longer reading. The superscript c (A^c), normally indicates that the Alexandrinus MS was corrected by a later scribe with the longer reading. However, a closer look at the MS reveals that it was most likely originally written by the first scribe, because it is not positioned in the margin or in between lines, as corrections often are. Instead, the quote forms part of both the penultimate and last lines of the second column as part of a longer sentence. There is no apparent room for the longer reading to be subsequently slotted in. The superscript A^c is probably assigned because the second column in which the quote is included has one more line (52 lines) than the first column (51 lines). Columns normally have the same amount of lines on a page (vellum) – 49-51 lines in Alexandrinus.⁸⁴⁵ However, even if it were indeed inserted by the Alexandrinus scribe while copying from another MS where the quote was not included, for example, it would only further support the argument that knowledge of the quote probably enjoyed some widespread authority in fifth century Egypt to have impressed upon the scribe the need to interpolate it.⁸⁴⁶

Another argument in favour of the longer reading is by W. A. Strange, who was mentioned in the previous chapter. The argument is made in spite of the problem of textual originality.⁸⁴⁷ Strange argues for the longer reading of both verses 37 and 39. Verse 37, which along with Lucan linguistic consistency provides a likely

⁸⁴³ There is also the Leon palimpsest (*l*) and a few Old Latin codices (*ar*, *l*, *p*, *w*) along with a smattering of Vulgate editions.

⁸⁴⁴ Codex Bezae stops at Acts 8:29 before picking up again at 10:4. It does not include 8:30 – 10:3. This could be because its page has gone missing.

⁸⁴⁵ Aland and Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, 107.

⁸⁴⁶ Joseph H Crehan, 'The Confirmation of the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:39)', in *The Heritage of the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Georges Vasilievich Florovsky*, ed. by David Neimen and Margaret Schatkin (Rome: Pont Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1973), 188.

⁸⁴⁷ Strange, *The Problem of the Text of Acts*, 65–77.

motive of second century copyists who tended to mask initiation rites with a veil of secrecy. And verse 39, because ἄγγελος δὲ κυρίου as a physical agency working upon humans appears to be more in keeping with Luke's style than πνεῦμα κυρίου. This is notwithstanding the possibility of an accidental omission by the skip of the eye. The longer reading, “πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐπέπεσεν ἐπὶ τὸν εὐνοῦχον, ἄγγελος δὲ”, might have been influenced by OT citations such as 2 Kings 2:16-18. It speaks of a narrative of 50 prophets who wanted to search for Elijah after his ascension and suggested that the “spirit of the Lord” had apprehended him.⁸⁴⁸ It is quite possible, at least, that an early Christian community conversant with the Western texts celebrated the plausibility that the eunuch departed with missiological intent. Whether Irenaeus and others made this causal link with the longer variant of Acts 8:39 deserves further attention, especially since Irenaeus routinely used the longer Western recension of Acts.

Nevertheless, the phrase, πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐπέπεσεν ἐπὶ τὸν εὐνοῦχον, is a verbal allusion to Acts 1:8, where Luke cites, λήμψεσθε δύναμιν ἐπελθόντος τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος ἐφ' ὑμᾶς. The ‘power’ (δύναμιν) here is a fall back on Luke 24:47, 49 where the disciples were instructed to stay in Jerusalem until they received it. Acts 1:8 is not only a reminder but an elaboration of Luke 24:47, 49. Note, however, that Acts 1:8 combines ‘power’ with the ‘coming of the spirit’: “you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you [ἐπελθόντος [...]] ἐφ' ὑμᾶς[.]” Evidently, the coming of the Holy Spirit is efficacious of power (from heaven – Luke 24:49). The notion of the Holy Spirit ‘coming upon’ someone by means of a verb of motion and the preposition ἐπί, whether through the verb ἐπερχέσθαι (to come upon), ἐπιπίπτειν (to fall upon) or καθίζειν (to sit upon) *inter*

⁸⁴⁸ Cf. Thomas L. Brodie, ‘Towards Unraveling the Rhetorical Imitation of Sources in Acts: 2 Kgs 5 as One Component of Acts 8,9-40’, *Biblica* 67.1 (1986): 41–67.

alia, is consistently used in Acts to indicate missional intent.⁸⁴⁹ In the Ethiopian story Luke refines the verb, ‘to come’ (with respect to the Holy Spirit upon the Eunuch), by using the more focused verb, ἐπιπίπτειν (to fall upon) as if to make the point more emphatically. This usage of ἐπιπίπτειν is in contrast to its use in Acts 8:16, where the people of Samaria had not yet received the Holy Spirit even though they were previously baptised by Philip (οὐδέπω γὰρ ἦν ἐπ’ οὐδενὶ αὐτῶν ἐπιπεπτωκός). They had to wait for the apostles before experiencing their anointing (8:17). Furthermore, ἐπιπίπτειν πνεῦμα ἅγιον is also used with respect to the Gentiles present at Cornelius’ conversion (10:44) and Peter’s testimony in Jerusalem (11:15).

Hence, as Bertram Melbourne fortuitously alludes to when taking into account the Western reading of Acts 8:39, there are at least four ‘Pentecosts’: Jerusalem (Acts 2), Samaria (Acts 8), African (Acts 8), and Gentile (Acts 10).⁸⁵⁰ In fact, Melbourne refers to the Ethiopian eunuch’s phenomenon as the “black Pentecost”, signifying the Kingdom of Cush whence the Ethiopian eunuch came. His Pentecost is a collective Pentecost, his community’s Pentecost. It is the gratuity of his Pilgrimage. In the gaze of whiteness, it is convenient to ignore the 8:39 recension reading. Its omission cum erasure fits the expectation of a seeing with epistemological blind spots that negates the longer reading. Indeed, a transgressively raced and hypersexualised body would not warrant such a gift of the Holy Spirit. It is sufficient that he is baptised in water. Yet, a hermeneutic of conviviality celebrates the promise of his Pentecostal agency and reads his subsequent rejoicing as the consequence of his empowered agency (8:39). The point is, that at the Ethiopian eunuch’s departing joy is not merely at the behest

⁸⁴⁹ Acts 1:8; 2:3-4, 17-18; 8:17, 39; 10:44; 11:15; 13:2-3; 19:6.

⁸⁵⁰ I am indebted to Bertram L Melbourne, ‘Acts 1:8 Re-Examined: Is Acts 8 Its Fulfillment?’, *The JRT* 57–58.2.1–2 (2005): 11–2, for this thought. Melbourne does not explicitly state the four ‘Pentecosts’, but he alludes to them, adding a fifth – that of Paul’s Pentecost in Damascus, Syria.

of being baptised, but at being commissioned by the Holy Spirit. In which case, inherent in the commissioning for Luke is missiological intent in accordance with the promise Acts 1:8.

However, the coming of the Holy Spirit is not only efficacious of Pentecostal power but of Pentecostal mission. For in Acts 1:8 the epexegetical *καὶ* links the second clause as an elaboration or explanation of the first: “You shall receive power ... [*καὶ*] and (that is) you shall be my witness...” Notice then this sequence with the Ethiopian’s conversion. Once the Holy Spirit fell upon him (8:39), he went on his way rejoicing (8:40). This is suggestive of a going with intent, missiological intent. It could be anticipated that the Ethiopian Eunuch was to reach his people even in the fashion of Paul’s mission to a more European dominated Gentile world.⁸⁵¹ Such is the significance of the longer recension for an enhancement to his pilgrimage.

4.2.1.8 Summary

In this section, the exegetical picture that emerges convivially is one of a devout pilgrimage, shared by the Ethiopian eunuch and his entourage, albeit on a return journey, and opened up to a fellow traveller on a mission, Philip. The pilgrimage follows a long and open tradition of conviviality and diasporic journeys across the Sinaitic Peninsula. While the multicultural nature of Sinaitic journeys were diverse, even inclusive of tourism, the Ethiopian eunuch was intentionally on a cultic pilgrimage. His communal reading on *ἡ ὁδός* is transformed by Philip’s biblical exposition, facilitating a joining of The Way through baptism. In this way, there is a mutually transgressive crossing of systemic borders, which sees Philip being whisked away and the anointed Ethiopian eunuch continuing with his journey, but with a new intentionality of mission. Everything about this

⁸⁵¹ Given the chronological sequence of the conversions, the Ethiopian eunuch was conceivably a missionary to the Ethiopians before Paul was to the Gentiles.

journey is conducive to a pilgrimage, indeed, to the spirit of pilgrimage: to experience spiritual transformation. The African's journey points to 'black Pentecost' and a Jewish pilgrimage of a kind. Then, 'why cannot he be a Jew?'

4.3 *The Politics of Representation*

Representation is the second major conceptual trope that is elicited by our text when convivially considering the question, 'why cannot the Ethiopian eunuch be a Jew?' is 'representation'. A pilgrimage of approximately 2000 miles, taking several months,⁸⁵² requires strategic arrangements and preparations, not only materially, but politically, religiously and domestically. If indeed he is a pilgrim, then why him? Why a eunuch as a representative? Of all the Ethiopians, why is he going or 'sent' to Jerusalem on this pilgrimage? Moreover, what would his representation in terms of his delegation bring to the discursive force of Acts 8:26-40?

Representation as a convivially conceptual trope sees identity coming into being through performativity. In literary terms, we have already seen how efficacious the performativity of the Ethiopian eunuch is in 8:26-40 (section 4.1.1.5). His speech acts and non-verbal communication is psychagogically embodied in his devout commitment to his boundary crossing pilgrimage. In this way, the iteration of an evolving Afroasiatic Jewish identity is being redefined and remade to the extent that it amounts to a gift for a waiting community back home. In this sense, the above section on pilgrimage (4.2) is a form of representation through performativity, an ethical process of how his ethnoreligious, socio-political, and

⁸⁵² Travelling back to Meroë would have taken longer due to, one, having to travel upstream, though aided by prevailing winds, and, two, the six formidable cataracts along the way. See Hermann Kees, *Ancient Egypt: A Cultural Topography* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1978), chs. 12-13. John Baines and Jaromir Malek, *Atlas of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Facts on File Inc, 1980).

gendered identity is continuously coming into being. This latter point focuses on the politics of representation, which itself is constitutive of the convivial optic, and which serves to correct the Cartesian gaze.

However, if a diasporic group were to send a representative to a religious festival, certain factors would have had to be weighed to determine the choice of the representative. Would he be socially connected enough? Would he be politically important enough? Would he be religiously authoritative enough, being *au fait* sufficiently with the intricacies of the theology of the religion, the rites of the institution and the ministry of its cultic practices? What could he take to the pilgrimage worthy of the Ethiopian 'Jews' and bring back beneficial to his people? These questions characterise the question of the politics of representation, a politics that point to certain contingencies without commodifying them. One has to guard against commandeering (or commodifying) the notion of representation for different purposes beyond the literary signatures of the texts. Then it would be caricaturing. This, however, can be resisted by remembering that the traffic of culture is a two-way street.

Given the acute religious context of his journey and to aid an exploration of this politics of representation, there are three literary markers of representation – contingencies – that may help to appropriate a plausible Jewish ethnoreligious identity, and which may serve to expose the question, 'why cannot the Ethiopian eunuch be a Jew?' These are found in Acts 8:27 and are the conceptual categories of race, kinship and sexuality, which are respectively represented by the terms, Ethiopian (Αἰθίοψ), kinsman (ἀνὴρ) and eunuch (εὐνοῦχος). The category of class as represented by δυνάστης will not be singularly looked at as it is inextricably interwoven with race, kinship and sexuality. What is of interest here is the way these terms intersectionally serve as interlocking systems of domination when used in commentaries that attempt to repress the agency of the Ethiopian

eunuch, occluding the opportunity of viewing him as a fully-fledged Jew. They will be examined in turn, although the section on the eunuch will be considered in two stages: eunuch traditions and the priestly eunuch.

4.3.1.1 Ethiopian (Αἰθίοψ)

The first literary marker of representation, which allows for the possibility of a Jewish Ethnoreligious identity, is Αἰθίοψ (Ethiopian). An underlying assumption, which is often silent in many texts, is that the Ethiopian cannot be a Jew because he is ‘black’, he is a sub-Saharan African. Spencer’s claim is among the more explicit pronouncements when he states: “his [the Ethiopian eunuch’s] African heritage tips off his indisputable Gentile identity”.⁸⁵³ While, as has been seen, whiteness asserts the politics of obfuscation with respect to annexing Egypt to the notion of the ‘Middle East’ of ‘Ancient Near East’, as not belonging to Africa, it also asserts that the presence of Semitic characteristics is speculative south of the Sahara. Thence, the Ethiopian trope serves through the performative optic of whiteness as a vector of forbiddance. The Ethiopian cannot be a Jew.

The above then begs the question: what if the construal argued against the Ethiopian eunuch is one against what he represents in terms of his ethnocultural efficacy? Then this would be due to race thinking, as with Michal Beth Dinkler’s remark. In her article, ‘Interpreting Pedagogical Acts’, is a claim, as if headlining, that he was an “Ethiopian eunuch”: it is “a clear indication that this character is not a Jew, but an outsider”.⁸⁵⁴ The corollary is that he cannot be a Jew because of his race – a conclusion made (even after reading her footnote explanation) from

⁸⁵³ Spencer, *The Portrait of Philip in Acts*, 129. See also Shauf, ‘Locating the Eunuch’, *CBQ* 71.4 (2009): 763, who concludes, “being Jewish is not a natural corollary of being Ethiopian”. Further, Cornu and Shulam, *A Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Acts*, 2:415, claim that the Ethiopian eunuch’s non-qualification of being a Jew is due to him being of the people of Ham, which is both a presumptuous and weak argument.

⁸⁵⁴ Dinkler, ‘Interpreting Pedagogical Acts’, 419.

what seems to be gratuitous, ideological assumptions.⁸⁵⁵ Then it is a construal defined by means of ethnic reasoning; then it is an antagonism against what his blackness represents in antiquity, especially in the mirror of (modern) whiteness. It is one against blackness. It is one against the ancient (and modern) currency of the hospitality of his blackness.

In fact, modern conceptions of Ethiopia conjure up many stereotypes of deprived, poor, marginalised, dispossessed, malnourished, underdeveloped Africans – which is an orientalising trope.⁸⁵⁶ To Luke’s readers, however, Ethiopia represented a proud, upright and powerful kingdom, occupying both East Africa and the swathes of unknown land inclusive of south of the Sahara. The early third century Athenian biographer, Philostratus, saw it as covering “the western wing of the entire earth under the sun, just as India does the eastern wing”, (*The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, 6.1). Ethiopia was known as Cush/Kush, Nubia and later in Hellenistic times, Aethiops (Αἰθίοψ transliterated as Aithiopia), and even later, Abyssinia. The centre of its kingdom during the first century was Meroë, which sat almost equidistant between the 5th and 6th cataracts of the Nile River, and formed the centre of the Meroitic Kingdom. Rich in resources of gold,⁸⁵⁷

⁸⁵⁵ The explanation may make at least three points. One, that he was either a castrated or an official eunuch. But there is nothing stopping him from being castrated after circumcision. Later, the Rabbis would pore over this conundrum – see m. Yeb. 8 and m. Nid. 5.9. Two, that Ethiopia was deemed very far away and so fulfilled the ‘end of the earth’ motif of Acts 1:8. But, the ‘end of the earth’ motif does not negate the presence of the scattered Jews. In any case, the recapitulation of this phrase in 13:47 seems to anchor its antecedent in LXX. Isaiah 45:22; 48:20; 49:6; and 62:11 speak of the ‘end of the earth’ as salvation as a gathering of the nations to Jerusalem. These nations are either Gentile, diasporic Jews or both. And, three, his race made him ‘other’.

⁸⁵⁶ Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2001). See especially the ‘Introduction’, 1-23.

⁸⁵⁷ Necia Desiree Harkless, *Nubian Pharaohs and Meroitic Kings: The Kingdom of Kush* (Milton Keynes: AuthorHouse, 2006), 181. Harkless states that “the uniqueness of the treasure...the God of Meroë is without parallel in the Mediterranean-Nile Valley Sea cultures”, p.175.

ivory⁸⁵⁸ and ebony,⁸⁵⁹ it was part of the maritime commercial and diplomatic trade routes.

Its remoteness was its allure, its dark-skinned people its mystery.⁸⁶⁰ From the belly of this heartland emerged a Lukan literary figure in Acts 8:27 whose stature is matched by his discursive presence: καὶ ἰδοὺ...Αἰθίοψ [and behold, an Ethiopian]. As noted above, Αἰθίοψ as an appellative noun is part of a hanging, independent nominative clause of as many as four appositional nouns – ἄνθρωπος Αἰθίοψ εὐνοῦχος δυνάστης – which cumulatively marks the author's emphatic shift from Philip (8:26) to the commanding character of the Ethiopian, with the rhetorical force of affective aplomb. The Ethiopian represents a prestigious, powerful figure if impressive in terms of his gender and social status, then most certainly compelling in terms of his ethnicity. Snowden insists that in classical texts there was a range of phenotypical representations of the Ethiopians from the 'true negro' to a mixed form in terms of their facial features, their complexion range of 'blackness' and the range of their tightly curled, woolly hair to straight hair.⁸⁶¹ Snowden's description of the "true negro" appears to reflect a stereotypical representation of the sub-Saharan phenotype: very dark skin, woolly hair, thick lips and flat nose. The other types are, however, the "lesser negroid" African such as the Nilotic, Hamitic and Nilo-Hamitic – and those who were mix.⁸⁶² This classification is possibly due to Snowden reflecting the 'pseudo-

⁸⁵⁸ Herodotus speaks of Ethiopia being rich in gold and ivory (*Hist.* 3.97). For the importance of ivory and gold to trading between India and Ethiopia in the first century, see Romila Thapar, *A History of India*, Reprint (London: Penguin, 1990), 1:114.

⁸⁵⁹ Anthony John Arkell, *A History of the Sudan from the Earliest Times to 1821* (London: Greenwood Press, 1973); Jacke Phillips, 'Punt and Aksum: Egypt and the Horn of Africa', *JAH* 38.3 (1997): 423–457.

⁸⁶⁰ Aaron P. Johnson, 'The Blackness of Ethiopians: Classical Ethnography and Eusebius's Commentary on the Psalms', *HTR* 99.2 (2006): 165–186, notes that "already in Homer the extreme remoteness of the Ethiopians, geographical and mythical, appears central to their representation in the Greek literary imagination" (p. 167).

⁸⁶¹ Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, 8. For description of hair, see Herodotus, *Hist.* 7.70.1.

⁸⁶² Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, 11–14.

scientific' construction of the race theory of his time, the semantics of which he in turn superimposed upon the Greeks' description of Ethiopians as characterising a monolithic 'blackness' as the exclusive racial identifier of Ethiopians. As a positivistic portrayal it was not without severe criticisms by his contemporaries.⁸⁶³

The phenotypical range of sub-Saharan as reflected in ancient writings is therefore best viewed as a range of features including that of complexion and hair type.⁸⁶⁴ However surmised, it is fair to state that the people of the Ethiopian eunuch were reputed to be in the words of Herodotus – whose record according to Snowden, began the onset of a reliable and accurate history of Ethiopians⁸⁶⁵ – “the tallest and most beautiful people” (*Hist.* 3.20). This in spite of some detractors (cf. Strabo 7.2.1 – typical of the snobbery of the Graeco-Romans, Strabo referred to the Ethiopians as barbarians: “defective and inferior to the temperate part [of the Mediterranean world]”). Significantly, the idealisation of the Ethiopians in Graeco-Roman literature and art might be seen to be commensurate with the idealisation of the Ethiopian eunuch in our story.

From the time of Homer, the Greeks and later the Romans would normally measure people of colour against, for example, the blackness of the Ethiopian skin.⁸⁶⁶ Homer's Ethiopians lived in land divided by the sea (*Od.* 1. 22-24) – some

⁸⁶³ See C. R. Whittaker, 'Blacks in Antiquity: A Review Article', *Phoenix* 25.2 (1971): 187; Morton Smith, 'Blacks in Antiquity: Review Article', *The American Historical Review* 76.1 (1971): 140; B. H. Warmington, 'Blacks in Antiquity: A Review Article', *African Historical Studies* 4.2 (1971): 384; D. A. Miller, 'Before Color Prejudice: The Ancient View of Blacks. A Review Article', *Journal of Social History* 20.3 (1987): 646.

⁸⁶⁴ Pind. *Pythian Odes* 4:208-15; Aeschylus, *Suppliant Women* 154-155; Lucian *Nav.* 2-3; and the anonymous *TrGF* Adespota F 161

⁸⁶⁵ Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, 104-5; Frank M. Snowden, 'The Negro in Classical Italy', *The American Journal of Philology*, 68.3 (1947): 268; Frank M. Snowden, *Before Color Prejudice: The Ancient View of Blacks* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 56.

⁸⁶⁶ See Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, 2-7, for a close and detailed demonstration of this point.

on the east of the rising of the sun⁸⁶⁷ and others on the west.⁸⁶⁸ Whether this is the Red Sea dividing Arabia and the land of Cush or on either side of the River Nile is uncertain.⁸⁶⁹ It may, however, correspond to Herodotus's two 'Ethiopias' (*Hist.* 2.29.4):

The country above Elephantine now begins to be inhabited by Ethiopians: half the people of the island are Ethiopians, and half Egyptians. Near the island is a great lake, on whose shores live nomadic Ethiopians. After crossing this, you come to the stream of the Nile, which empties into this lake.

Herodotus goes on to state that after forty days of travelling south, one reaches the capital city of Ethiopia, Meroë (*Hist.* 2.29.6). *The Periplus Maris Erythraei*, on the other hand, introduces in its opening paragraphs, Adulis, a famous harbour, as a "fair-sized village [κώμη σύμμετρος]" and "established by law", not too far – five days journey inland – from what is probably the first extant reference in the first century to the metropolis of the kingdom of Axum, Axumitēs [Ἀξωμίτην].⁸⁷⁰ Herodotus makes another reference, this time to two types of Ethiopians (*Hist.* 7.70.1):

The Ethiopians above Egypt and the Arabians had Arsames for commander, while the Ethiopians of the east (for there were two kinds of them in the army) served with the Indians; they were not different in appearance from the others, only in speech and hair:

⁸⁶⁷ Herodotus further states that the East Ethiopians spoke Phoenician (*Hist.* 7.89), indicating a historical connection between the Ethiopians and Phoenicians. Cf. Homer, *Odyssey* 4.83-84.

⁸⁶⁸ Snowden avers that the western Ethiopians occupied what today is Sudan and possibly Nigeria, while the eastern Ethiopians occupied regions between the Nile and Red Sea, particularly Somaliland. See Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, 101-2.

⁸⁶⁹ For challenges with locating seas and oceans in antiquity, see Martin W. Lewis, 'Dividing the Ocean Sea', *Geographical Review* 89.2 (1999): 188-214. For a cautionary note on centring the 'ocean view' concept as a motivating force for marking the geo-political and cultural spaces of Africa, see Jesse Benjamin, 'Of Nubians and Nabateans: Implications of Research on Neglected Dimensions of Ancient World History', in *Conceptualizing/Re-Conceptualizing Africa: The Construction of African Historical Identity*, ed. by Maghan Keita (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2002), 31-2, 47-8.

⁸⁷⁰ Vincent, *The Periplus*, 1:4.

the Ethiopians from the east are straight-haired, but the ones from Libya have the woolliest hair of all men.

This reference points to the fluid kinship, which in turn points to a breadth in the spectrum of phenotypes that constitute, for Herodotus, Ethiopians. In *Hist.* 7.70.2, he goes on to describe how those associated with the east bore resemblance to Indians, while those in the west bore resemblance to Libyans/Egyptians. The picture built during this Hellenistic period is one where the people of sub-Saharan Africa were collectively considered Ethiopians.

Ethiopia's otherness, urged in part by its remoteness, also lent some mystique to their peoplehood. In effect, they were idealised, for example, as having a special relationship with Zeus and the gods – a reputation that continued well into the second century (*Apuleius*, 11.5)⁸⁷¹ – putting on lavish feasts for them (*Iliad* 1. 423-424). This would contrast at the time with the relative hardships in the rest of the Homeric world.⁸⁷² This mythical attribution of their sumptuous wealth to their spiritual prowess should not be lost on any Graeco-Roman perceptions of their mystique. Their internationality was often acclaimed for their inclusive education,⁸⁷³ bravery on the seas and wealth of resources, which would accompany them for commerce.⁸⁷⁴ Pliny states that in his time – first century – Meroë was inhabited by 250,000 soldiers, thousands of artisans and 45 tribal

⁸⁷¹ “The people of the two Ethiopias, who are lighted by the first rays of the Sun-God as he rises every day, and the Egyptians, who are strong in ancient lore, worship me with the rites that are truly mine and call me by my real name, which is Queen Isis” – Apuleius, *Metamorphoses (Books VII-XI)*, trans. by J. Arthur Hanson, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 2:247.

⁸⁷² James S. Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought: Geography, Exploration, and Fiction* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 52.

⁸⁷³ The second century Syrian satirist, Lucian of Samosata, reminds his readers, for example, that the Ethiopians were responsible for the invention of astrology, which was later adopted by the Egyptians (Luk. *Astr.* 3.4). Whether this could be substantiated or not is beside the point. The point is, they were ‘reputed’ among the esteemed of certain Graeco-Roman society for their erudition.

⁸⁷⁴ Diodorus 3.2; Pomponius Mela 3.85; Seneca, *Hercules Furens* 38–41; Lactantius Placidus on Statius, *Thebaid* 5.427. Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 137.

kings.⁸⁷⁵ It is in the wake of the force of this cultural knowledge that the Ethiopian eunuch is introduced by Luke as a key member of the government of a queen mother who held the traditional dynastic title, Candace, rather like that of pharaoh.⁸⁷⁶ He comes with the full sovereign patronage of his Queen, who herself comes from a prestigious line of Candaces, among whom was Candace Amanirenas (c.40-10 BCE) who successfully fended off Augustus Caesar in a number of combats known as the Meroitic War for the liberatory assurance of her people (27-22 BCE).⁸⁷⁷ Then at the behest of this distinguished, matriarchal tradition the Ethiopian eunuch enters the literary scene of the desert. The figure of Candace thereby opens up a liberatory hermeneutical resource for his majestic figure.

The Ethiopian eunuch was not merely an object of exotic curiosity, mind,⁸⁷⁸ but an influential, imposing figure of power, wealth, prestige and mystique. In this

⁸⁷⁵ Pliny *Natural History* 6.35, 180. Pliny conjures up a picture of plenty of inter-tribal conflicts. Strabo, on the other hand, suggests that any reputation of violence was due to ‘ancients’ claiming that Ethiopians were notorious for attacking defenceless travellers for no reason, (Strabo 1.7.53).

⁸⁷⁶ ‘Candace’ is the Latin form of the Meroitic *kdke* (Kandakē), signifying ‘Queen-Mother’ or ‘Queen-Regent’. Bion of Soli, *Aethiopica* 1 holds that the queen ruled because her son, the king, was traditionally regarded as the ‘child of the sun’ and too holy to govern the kingdom’s affairs. The political economy of *candaces* occupied the historical landscape of Ethiopia between the Alexandrian and Augustinian empires (cf. Pliny, *Nat.* 6.35.186). See Raoul McLaughlin, *The Roman Empire and the Indian Ocean: The Ancient World Economy & The Kingdoms of Africa, Arabia & India* (Barnsley, Yorkshire: Pen and Sword, 2014), 64–9.

⁸⁷⁷ Strabo ‘spins’ this account in favour of Rome (17.1.54). However, two large *stele* found at a first century temple site south of Meroë bear victory inscriptions that point to reparations given to Ethiopia by Augustus (*F.H.N.* 2:176).

⁸⁷⁸ Exoticism, not a word used in Graeco-Roman antiquity, but one which may be applied as an aesthetic category for their perception of peoples in far-flung regions such as Ethiopia, does have an othering notion. In effect, it homogenises diversities and thereby creates exotic polarity – ‘them [Atlantic south] and us [Atlantic north]’ – which may have severe consequences in matters of the essentialised skin, bone and hair. In which case, care should be taken when attributing it from Luke’s perspective to the Ethiopian eunuch. It is a common trope often carelessly employed to describe the Ethiopian eunuch, even in recent times. See, for example, Alexander Kyrychenko, *The Roman Army and the Expansion of the Gospel: The Role of the Centurion in Luke-Acts*, Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 163; Virginia Burrus, ‘The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles’, in *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*, ed. by Fernando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 149; Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts*, ed. by Mikeal Parsons and Charles Talbert, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 118–9; Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light: Aspects of Conversion in the New Testament* (Philadelphia, PN: Fortress Press, 1986), 123; Spencer, ‘The Ethiopian Eunuch and His Bible’, 155–156). For a critical look at

guise, his blackness is foregrounded by his introduction to the scene of the narrative (Acts 8:27). He is the *Αἰθίοψ*, the burnt-skin man. And the force of this conceptual category of ethnicity strategically organised Luke's audience's reception of knowledge.

However, in light of the foregoing, what is of significance is the question of whether Luke's readers could anticipate the Ethiopian eunuch as being imaged as a fully-fledged Jew. It is a question of whether their imagination could conceptualise a historically sub-Saharan African as a Jew. The answer, in part, is facilitated by the open and fluid mobility and migration of Afroasiatic peoples, as alluded to earlier. This would account for a range of Africans one might legitimately call Ethiopians who historically shared the Semitic languages of the region.⁸⁷⁹

In addition, however, and particularly critical to vitiating the question, 'why cannot the Ethiopian eunuch be a Jew?' is the matter of historical precedence. More specifically, is there clear-cut evidence of a historically Jewish figure hailing from Ethiopia during this time? For such a precedence, definitive evidence is lacking. However, there is sufficiently significant evidence that suggests that the Hellenistic imaginary of the Second Temple period did conceptualise the possibility of Ethiopians being Jews. This is in essence the basis of the question, that is, whether Luke's audience could conceptualise, and thereby anticipate, an Ethiopian eunuch being a fully-fledged Jew. As will be shown in the following, it is a question of the convivial imagination.

exoticism as a possibly conceptual tool of Luke, see Daniel Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian: Writing the 'Acts of the Apostles'*, trans. by Ken McKinney, Gregory J. Laughery, and Richard Bauckham, SNTSMS 121 (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), particularly 251–2.

⁸⁷⁹ Grover Hudson, 'Amharic', ed. by Bernard Comrie, *The World's Major Languages* (Oxford; New York: Routledge, 2018), 594–617; Robert Hetzron and Alan S. Kaye, 'Hebrew', ed. by Bernard Comrie, *The World's Major Languages* (Oxford; New York: Routledge, 2018), 578–93.

The source is Tacitus's *History* 5.2.2-13, which is a historiographical attempt to locate the origin of the Jews. It follows 5.2.1, an opening account introducing the military conquest of Jerusalem (66-70 CE) that is about to happen. Then, as if to offer a justification for the conquest it looks back at the putative origins of the Jews – 'origins' because six different theories of origin are tendered (*Hist.* 5.2.2-3a):

However, as I am about to describe the last days of a famous city, it seems proper for me to give some account of its origin. It is said that the Jews were originally exiles from the island of Crete who settled in the farthest parts of Libya at the time when Saturn had been deposed and expelled by Jove. An argument in favour of this is derived from the name: there is a famous mountain in Crete called Ida, and hence the inhabitants were called the Idaei, which was later lengthened into the barbarous form Iudaei. Some hold that in the reign of Isis the superfluous population of Egypt, under the leadership of Hierosolymus and Iuda, discharged itself on the neighbouring lands; many others think that they were an Egyptian [*Aethiopum* = Ethiopian] stock, which in the reign of Cepheus was forced to migrate by fear and hatred. Still others report that they were Assyrian refugees, a landless people, who first got control of a part of Egypt, then later they had their own cities and lived in the Hebrew territory and the nearer parts of Syria. Still others say that the Jews are of illustrious origin, being the Solymi, a people celebrated in Homer's poems, who founded a city and gave it the name Hierosolyma formed from their own. III. Most authors agree that once during a plague in Egypt which caused bodily disfigurement, King Bocchoris approached the oracle of Ammon and asked for a remedy, whereupon he was told to purge his kingdom and to transport this race into other lands, since it was hateful to the gods. So, the Hebrews were searched out and gathered together.

To summarise, the six theories are: one, the Jews were originally from Crete, but resettled in Libya; two, they were a colony from Egypt and discharged themselves to neighbouring regions of the Afroasiatic strip (for no particular reason); three, they were Ethiopians who were forced out of their homeland due to fear and

persecution; four, they were Assyrian refugees in Egypt before founding their own cities as far east as Syria; five, they were the Homeric Solymi people who founded their city, Hierosolyma (the Latin transliteration of the Greek, Ἱεροσόλυμα, Jerusalem); and six, they were the Hebrews who were driven by a plague out of Egypt. The latter story, which bears uncanny resemblance to the biblical Exodus story, is what Tacitus goes on to expand and explore, indicating his preference for this version of events (*History* 5.2.3b-13).⁸⁸⁰

Of interest is the reference to the Ethiopian Jews who emigrated from their homelands to the surrounding Afroasiatic regions (including Egypt) because of fear for their lives. There are three observations that would help to explicate this version. First, is the mythological texture of the text. It was normal practice for Egyptian and Greek mythology to be interwoven with recorded history in order to convey the intensity and immensity of the historical events. The larger-than-life picture was efficacious for conveying the force of the historical moment.⁸⁸¹ Second, the name Ethiopians (*Aethiopum*) is mistranslated in the Loeb Classical Library publication as Egyptian, indicating that the editor could not conceive of Jews being of Ethiopian stock in the wider assumption that Egyptians were geopolitically white. This ‘whitewashing’ persists in classical interpretations to undermine the role and place of both Egypt and Ethiopia in ancient history.⁸⁸² Third, the history of Ethiopian Jews is plausibly imaginable for Graeco-Roman

⁸⁸⁰ For an examination of the Tacitus text, see Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World*, 184–96.

⁸⁸¹ Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 184–85, suggests that the integration of Jewish history with Greek pre-history – mythology – was an effort, in this case by the Roman historian, Tacitus, to close the civilisational gap between the barbarous Jews and Greeks, and thereby imputed “great antiquity to the Jews” and afforded them great prestige, inasmuch as certain associations with ancient people, such as the Cretans, were acknowledged to have had a great civilization before that of mainland Greece.

⁸⁸² See an example of this obfuscation in Jiří Bartůněk and Pavel Dadák, ‘Colours of the Roman Empire: Could Minorities Be Authorities?’, *Ad Alta: Journal of Interdisciplinary Research* 5.2 (2015): 7–11. Cf. Simson Najovits, *Egypt, the Trunk of the Tree, A Modern Survey of and Ancient Land: The Consequences* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2003), 2:319, where Najovits presumes that Herodotus’s view of Egyptians was that of “Mediterranean-type dark-skinned whites”.

readerships. John Feldman adds an important note to this latter point: that although the forced exile of the Ethiopian Jews from their region during the reign of the Homeric King Cepheus could be coopted within the anti-Jewish discourse of a third century BCE author, Manetho – the Egyptian priest who wrote *Aegyptiaca* (*History of Egypt*) – the reference to the Ethiopians lends prestige to the Jews.⁸⁸³ One, because their King Cepheus along with his wife Cassiopeia ended up among the constellations of the sky. Two, this Greek myth adds legendary reputation to the antiquity of the Jews. And three,

it presents a simple explanation of how the Jews managed to come to Egypt; and, inasmuch as there were almost certainly Jews (the so-called Falashas) in Ethiopia before Hellenistic times, it may explain the connection between the two groups of Jews.⁸⁸⁴

Therefore, appropriating Ethiopian ancestry to their origins dignifies the Jews with prestige and honour. For Tacitus's readership, who are culturally aware of a long-acclaimed history of the Ethiopians, Ethiopian roots would enhance the reputation of the Jews, especially at the socio-political behest of historical testimonials such as Homer, *Iliad* 1.423, which promotes the wisdom, blameless piety and bravery of the Ethiopians. Whether Tacitus's accounts are historically accurate or not, is beside the point. The point is, Tacitus provides a template for conceptualising the Jews as *inter alia* Ethiopians. This is all the more the case, since with all six theories of their origins, there is contemporary documentary evidence of their domiciliation in all six places: Crete, Libya, Egypt, Ethiopia, Assyria and Solymi (Pisidia) – all of which, with the exception of Assyria, are mentioned in the book of Acts. This is moreover the case, despite Philo's testimony of the dispersion of Jews across the Afroasiatic region, that they

⁸⁸³ Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World*, 158–9, n. 48. Also, see pp. 519–20, nn. 49–51, for further postulations on the connection between Jews and Ethiopia in Antiquity.

⁸⁸⁴ Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World*, 189.

inhabited the region leading to the boundaries of Ethiopia (Philo, *In Flaccus*, 43).⁸⁸⁵ Philo was primarily concerned with the expanse of Egypt as a Roman territory – he only refers to boundaries towards Libya in the west and Ethiopia in the south – which was undergoing persecution by the colonial rulers in 38 CE. The Ethiopian kingdom was not subjected to Roman colonial rule, and consequently was not subjected to this tyranny. In any case, the nature of boundaries in antiquity was porous and ambiguous. The phrase, “boundaries of Ethiopia”, would perhaps refer more to the bordering ‘region’ of Ethiopian-inhabited places even if marked by the steep escarpment (καταβαθμός) at which the kingdom of Ethiopia started (cf. Philo, *In Flaccus*, 43).

While it may be popular to suggest that the Ethiopian eunuch is symbolically representative of an outsider, in the sense that he is a foreigner,⁸⁸⁶ indeed from the ‘end of the earth’, though notwithstanding a Jew, little is said on the question of whether he could have been a delegate of a diasporic people. From his literary introduction in Acts 8:27, it is clear that he is representing his Queen-Regent. In this sense, one may deduce that he was a delegate at the behest of Queen and government.⁸⁸⁷ However, when convivially noting the sociocultural current of

⁸⁸⁵ Philo recounts how the Egyptian prefect, Flaccus, facilitated what Pieter Willem van der Horst calls (anachronistically) the first pogrom. In this portion of the story Philo comments on how widespread the Jews abode in northern Africa: “Knowing that the city had two classes of inhabitants, our own nation and the people of the country, and that the whole of Egypt was inhabited in the same manner, and that Jews who inhabited Alexandria and the rest of the country from the Catabathmos on the side of Libya to the boundaries of Ethiopia were not less than a million of men [ἀπὸ τοῦ πρὸς Λιβύην καταβαθμοῦ μέχρι τῶν ὀρίων Αἰθιοπίας]”, (Philo, *In Flaccus*, 43). The pogrom happened in the summer of 38 CE. See Pieter W. Van Der Horst, *Philo’s Flaccus: The First Pogrom. Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 2:1–6.

⁸⁸⁶ Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, 2 vols (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 2:108. Dinkler, ‘Interpreting Pedagogical Acts’, 419.

⁸⁸⁷ For Luke, Ethiopia represented ‘the ends of the earth’ as in Luke 11:31 – “the queen of the South (= Sheba) [as judge of the people] . . . came from the ends of the earth (ἐκ τῶν περάτων τῆς γῆς) to listen to the wisdom of Solomon”. Note, the phrase ἐκ τῶν περάτων τῆς γῆς is different to ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς, which is the preferred phrase of LXX. The symbolism is clear: a delegate of the Queen-Regent of Ethiopia (proximate to Sheba) comes from the ends of the then known world to pay eventual obeisance to one “greater than Solomon”. Interestingly, in early Abyssinian Christianity there was a tendency to fuse the figures of Candace and the queen of Sheba (cf. Edward Ullendorff, ‘Candace [Acts VIII.27] and the Queen of Sheba’, *NTS* 2

collectivism in his society, it is unmistakable that he was representing those diasporic Jews who have a vested interest in the Hebrew scriptures as well as his own Ethiopian people.

Cheikh Anta Diop, the Senegalese historian, Egyptologist and anthropologist of pre-colonial Africa makes the persuasive case that the ontological value of family and matriarchy rendered African societies unitary in their governmental ventures.⁸⁸⁸ This had and still has the consistency of advancing contact with others as internally focussed and centralised, and accounts for the strong role of the Candace as mother of the monarch, in charge of domestic and foreign affairs. In this vein, great care was taken with appointments for international affairs, as the weight of the interests and investments were rested upon the shoulders of the delegate. As with any kingdom, Ethiopia had a long tradition of sending delegates abroad.⁸⁸⁹ This also accords with later accounts of the role and function of notable chamberlains in the Byzantine period.⁸⁹⁰

Notwithstanding his professional status as eunuch – whether a sexual or political – his diasporic Jewishness and royal affiliations rendered him both marginal and elite (δυνάστης) at the same time. In short, the Ethiopian Eunuch stood paradoxically for Luke as a premier prototype, symbolic of including all peoples, representative of the ultimate geographical, cultural (and gender⁸⁹¹) scope of the

(1955-56): 53-56. Significantly, Ethiopians are depicted as representing the “ends of the earth” in the LXX Ps 71:9.

⁸⁸⁸ Cheikh Anta Diop, *The Cultural Unity of Black Africa: The Domains of Patriarchy and of Matriarchy in Classical Antiquity* (London: Karnack House, 1989 [1963]). ‘Matriarchy’ does not mean the absence, subjugation or erasure of the masculine figure within the family. See also Cheikh Anta Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality?* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1989 [1955]).

⁸⁸⁹ Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, 134-5; Robert B. Jackson, *At Empire’s Edge: Exploring Rome’s Egyptian Frontier* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 120-1.

⁸⁹⁰ James Eugene Dunlap, *The Office of the Grand Chamberlain in the Later Roman and Byzantine Empires*, Humanistic Series, XIV (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1924), 161-324.

⁸⁹¹ Gender, because he would have had access to virtually all gender quarters of society.

spread of the gospel. More than triggering a cognitive dissonance in his readers, Luke's inclusion of this story could have added credibility, honour and status to fledgling ἐκκλησία communities for converting not merely a remote figure, in terms of his origins in the outer regions of the then known world, but a wealthy, educated and aristocratic brother – a δυνάστης with whom the likes of Theophilus (1:1-4) might have identified and welcomed. Now, I do not wish to dilute and thereby deny any dissonance the prominence given to an Ethiopian in Luke might have caused in later readers as witnessed in chapter 2. Neither should one discount any other similar later aversion for the Ethiopian race that other (non-Christian) peoples might have had. For example, as witnessed in chapter 3, some later rabbinic tradition held very negative views of blacks in antiquity. The point here is, though, that the Ethiopian eunuch stood with all his inconsistencies and inherent contradictions as a plausible figure of Jewish ethnoreligious identity.

In light of the momentum of my argument, it is difficult to imagine when viewed convivially that the Ethiopian eunuch is a lone ranger merely on a personal, private, individualistic pilgrimage. Given the literary marker of his Ethiopianess in the story, his associated collectivist outlook, and his hierarchical position, he is more plausibly seen as part of a larger delegation, who supports his pilgrimage interests and that of his queen and government. Indeed, he is convivially a representative of her majesty's government and people, who is leading a pilgrimage envoy and bringing universal credibility to Luke's fledgling ἐκκλησία communities.⁸⁹²

⁸⁹² This tradition of the symbolism of universalism goes as far back as Augustine in his comments on Psalm 69:31 – “Under the name of Egypt or of Ethiopia he hath signified the faith of all nations . . . he hath signified the nations of the whole world,” Augustine, *Exposition on the Book of Psalms*, NPNF, 8:298. Athanasius does the same, see Jean Marie Courtès, ‘The Theme of “Ethiopia” and “Ethiopians” in Patristic Literature’, in *The Image of the Black in Western Art: From the Early Christian Era to the ‘Age of Discovery’: From the Demonic Threat to the Incarnation of Sainthood*, ed. by David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., New ed. 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 1:9–32.

4.3.1.2 Kinsman (ἄνῆρ)

Luke gives the Ethiopian eunuch a grand, narrational entrance, almost of theatrical proportion, which introduces the second, significant literary marker, ἄνῆρ. The assumption is, however, that ἄνῆρ is incidental to the Ethiopian eunuch's ethnoreligious identity. At the most, it serves as an emphatic assertion of the eunuch's masculinity, subverting any notion of transgender or effeminacy. At the least, it is a redundant noun, adding little meaning or significance to the text. Either way, ἄνῆρ seems to have invited a fairly onerous vector of systemic suppression on the Ethiopian eunuch's intersectionality. Ἀνὴρ putatively adds negligible value to his Ethnoreligious identity. However, a closer convivial reading of ἄνῆρ suggests something else.

Luke begins in Acts 8:27, καὶ ἰδοὺ ἄνῆρ Αἰθίοψ εὐνοῦχος δυνάστης Κανδάκης βασιλίσσης Αἰθιοπῶν (literally, And look! A man, an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a grand chamberlain of Candace, the Ethiopian Queen-regent). This extravagant introduction is characterised by four nouns, signifying sonorously in apposition to each other. Significantly, no other character in Acts is accorded this rhetorical flourish by way of introduction.⁸⁹³ The announcement is led by the emphatic imperative, ἰδοὺ, behaving like an exclamatory particle, 'Oh', which is in turn followed by a string of appositional nouns, emphasising a stately character of immense weight. Ἰδοὺ directly introduces the nominative, ἄνῆρ (man or male), in apposition with a compound of nominatives, Αἰθίοψ, εὐνοῦχος and δυνάστης, which

⁸⁹³ The closest introduction of stature are (noting that the appositional nouns and pronouns are underlined for emphasis) Bar-Jesus in Acts 13:6, ἄνδρα τινὰ μάγον ψευδοπροφήτην Ἰουδαῖον ([they found] a certain man, a magician, a Jewish false-prophet); Cornelius in 10:22, Κορνήλιος ἐκατοντάρχης ἄνῆρ δίκαιος καὶ φοβούμενος τὸν Θεόν ([And he said] The centurion, Cornelius – a righteous and Godfearing man) – notwithstanding the absence of the imperative exclaimer, ἰδοὺ, there are two appositional nouns, one adjective and one appositional, adjectival participle here, which functions as an adjective; and Apollos in 18:24, Ἰουδαῖος δέ τις Ἀπολλῶς ὀνόματι Ἀλεξανδρεὺς τῷ γένει ἄνῆρ λόγιος κατήντησεν εἰς Ἐφεσον δυνατὸς ὢν ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς (Now a certain Jew, Apollos by name, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, competent in the scriptures met in Ephesus). However, in the Bar-Jesus and Apollos texts ἄνῆρ is modified by the indefinite pronoun, τις, which behaves adjectivally. In the Cornelius reference it is modified by the adjective, δίκαιος and adjectival phrase, φοβούμενος τὸν Θεόν (Cf. Acts 10:1).

themselves are syntactically unmarked but form a string of semantically connected asyndeta. While these are not strictly vocatives, their symmetrical succession as nouns as will be seen has the effect of vocatives, enforcing the rhetorical force of an emphatic announcement. This opening is as august as the stature of the man. He is an Ethiopian eunuch of presence, of repute, of significance. Indeed, as alluded to before ἀνὴρ, Αἰθίοψ, εὐνοῦχος and δυνάστης may invoke references to gender, race, sexuality and class respectively. However, there may be more to ἀνὴρ than gender, as we shall see.

This unique syntactical observation of ἀνὴρ in 8:27 is instructive. *Prima facie* its occurrence appears to be redundant. Of course, he is a man! Some commentators see this as emphasising the maleness of a castrated eunuch: ‘Even though he is castrated, he is not emasculated; he is a man!’ In this light, ἀνὴρ is a more dignified address than the more generic ἄνθρωπος.⁸⁹⁴ It certainly carries the semantic notion of an adult male. The normal glosses are male, man and husband – usually an adult male.⁸⁹⁵ Others argue for a category of generic use, as with ἄνθρωπος.⁸⁹⁶ However, with respect to the latter, I would contend that the burden of proof would have to be on that argument, for it is linguistically unlikely for ἀνὴρ to be synonymous with ἄνθρωπος, bereft of its male semantic meaning. Otherwise, Greek would be left with no obvious clear vocabulary choice when wishing to denote maleness in an unequivocal way.⁸⁹⁷

⁸⁹⁴ *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, ed. by William Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952).

⁸⁹⁵ See LSJ, 138. *LSJ* cites: I. man, opposed to woman (*anthropoi* being man as opposed to beast). II. man, opposed to god. III. man, opposed to youth, unless the context determines the meaning ... but *aner* alone always means a man in the prime of life, esp. warrior. IV. man emphatically, man indeed. V. husband. VI. Special usages [several idioms are given] (p. 138).

⁸⁹⁶ Louw-Nida's lexicon is quite misleading by including the semantic category, ‘person’ in 9.1 as a generic term for Rom. 4:8 and Matt. 14:35.

⁸⁹⁷ BAGD's entry on ἀνὴρ states, “man: 1. In contrast to woman ... Especially husband. 2. man in contrast to boy... 3. used with a word indicating national or local origin ... 4. Used with adjective to emphasize the dominant characteristic of a man ... 5. man with special emphasis on manliness ... 6. Equivalent to tis, someone ... 7. A figure of a man of heavenly beings who resemble men ... 8. Of Jesus as the judge of the

Yet, it appears that in Acts Luke employs *ἀνὴρ* strategically when it is literarily deployed in certain vocative constructions. More specifically we are referring to the appositional vocative of *ἀνὴρ* – that is, when it is rendered in juxtaposition with other vocatives. (This literary construction is absent in the Gospel of Luke). In Acts, the appositional vocative of *ἀνὴρ* is found only in direct speech, and as many as 29 times.⁸⁹⁸ A study of each instantiation seems to suggest that when it is rhetorically deployed in this way, it seems to connote the idea of ‘kinsman’. In which case, it may be translated: ‘fellow of...’, ‘companion of...’, or in British parlance, ‘mate of...’. In other words, there is a relationship of ‘affect’, and these associations are normally of an ethnoreligious kind. Then *ἀνὴρ* is used with the force of endearment, an endeared salutation to an audience of kindred spirit. It is a vocative of endearment, of convivial endearment. For example, on thirteen occasions *ἀνὴρ* is deployed in the vocative plural construction of *ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί* (men, brothers).⁸⁹⁹ On each occasion the speaker is addressing an audience with whom he shares kinship with fellow Jews. In which case, the translation may be rendered, “My fellow brothers”. Translators often render *ἄνδρες* as silent, since it is deemed redundant (cf. NIV, RSV). However, in such cases the force of kinship endearment could somewhat be lost in translation and rob the unwitting reader of a nuance implicit in the Greek text.

This sentiment of endearment – “my fellow...” – is equally applicable when *ἄνδρες* is paired with *Γαλιλαῖοι* (1:11), *Ἰουδαῖοι* (2:14), *Ἰσραηλῖται* (2:22; 3:12; 5:35; 13:16;

world” (BAGD, 66-7).

⁸⁹⁸ A lexicographical analysis indicates that there are overall 29 incidences of the vocative use, of which 23 are appositional vocatives and 6 substantive vocatives. This count is inclusive of the Bezae (D) and Oxford (E) variant readings of Acts 3:17 [*ἄνδρες*] *ἀδελφοί*. There are ‘other usages’ which include *ἀνὴρ* as a single predicate nominative (e.g., 7:26), subject (e.g., 8:12) or object (e.g., 5:9) of a verb (or participle, e.g., 9:7), with or without an adjective (e.g., 11:24) and the corresponding arthrous and anarthrous uses. On the other hand, the indefinite ascription *ἀνὴρ τις* (a certain man) is used in a consistent way, specifying a particular male with or without reference to status or affect (cf. Acts 3:2; 5:1; 8:9; 10:1; 14:8; 16:9; 17:34; 22:12).

⁸⁹⁹ Acts 1:16; 2:29, 37; 3:17 (D & E MSS); 7:2; 13:15, 26, 38; 15:7, 13; 22:1; 23:1; 28:17.

21:28), and Ἐφέσιοι (19:35, where the Ephesian city clerk is addressing the Ephesian crowd – my fellow Ephesians). Nevertheless, its rhetoric of solidarity is not characterised by a purity of consistency and originality. There is some ethnoreligious slippage between the speaker and their audience, where the very nature of what they are sharing is marked by *différance*, leaving the desired state of agreement between speaker and recipient open to further negotiation of fulfilment. The resultant self-identities between the relationships are therefore partial and hybrid. Even in the unlikely use of the vocative in 17:22, where Paul addresses the philosophers and enthusiasts alike as, Ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι (Fellow Athenians), the connotation of ethnoreligious endearment would render the translation as ‘kinsman Athenians’ or ‘fellow philosophers’, or ‘comrades of Athens’. Then Paul’s affirmation of their religiosity and respect for different gods suggests that he perceives an implicit kinship bond, even if fictive.⁹⁰⁰ Real but not complete, he is appealing to kinship solidarity.

What is more, it seems that Luke subordinates the masculinity gloss of ἀνὴρ in favour of an emphasis on kinship in other constructions than the appositional vocative. When it is used as a substantive vocative – ἀνὴρ or ἄνδρες – as in 7:26; 14:15; 19:25; 27:10, 21, 25,⁹⁰¹ it seems to be also used in this technical sense in Acts. In which case, it could either be translated in the substantive as “kinsman” or “kingsmen”, or as a substitute – e.g., “my fellow compatriots”, “my fellow kinsman”, “my fellow Jews”, according to the composition of the recipients.

⁹⁰⁰ “Fictive kinship speaks of non-consanguineal relations as if they were consanguineal in nature in order to create social ties that may not have existed other- wise,” T. M. Lemos, ‘Kinship, Community, and Society’, in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Ancient Israel*, ed. by Susan Niditch (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 378.

⁹⁰¹ Acts 27:10, 21, 25 has Paul addressing fellow travellers.

Yet, there is one unique instance where there is a succession of appositional nominative nouns (i.e., nominative nouns juxtaposed beside other nominative nouns) without any modifiers, whether adjectives or pronoun. This is found in our text, Acts 8:27, where *ἄνθρωπος* is rendered as an appositional nominative noun beside three others – *Αἰθίοψ*, *εὐνοῦχος* and *δυνάστης*. It is the only construction of its kind in all of Acts. Other paired constructions of the nominative *ἄνθρωπος* are with adjectival modifiers whether directly (see for example *ἄνδρες εὐλαβείς* in 8:2; *ἄνθρωπος λόγιος* in 18:24) or indirectly (as with the indefinite pronoun *τις* behaving adjectivally in 3:2; 5:1; 8:9; 10:1; 14:8; 16:9; 17:34; 22:12). These ameliorate the rhetorical force of *ἄνθρωπος*. However, this is not the case with the unique rendering of 8:27. The appositional nouns led by *ἄνθρωπος* and introduced by the signifying imperative, exclamatory particle, *ἰδοὺ*, appear to behave with the force of a vocative. It is as though the narrator is making a direct announcement of a grand entry and in the similitude of *ἄνθρωπος* with appositional vocatives in ‘direct speech’ introduces the unique Lukan character – “Oh, an Ethiopian kinsman, court official eunuch of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of her entire treasury”. In which case, *ἄνθρωπος* is not definitively or purely signified as a masculine marker. Instead, its kinship utility connotes a sonorous utility that implies a convivial kinship between Luke the author or narrator and his respective audience. This kinship is a derived affinity that marks a kinship solidarity of an ethnoreligious kind. In which case, Luke conceptualises the Ethiopian eunuch as a kinsman, a fellow ethnoreligious ally. From Philip’s perspective, the Ethiopian eunuch is a fellow traveller, a fellow kinsman.

Notwithstanding this relationship, Schnabel makes an insightful point that *ἄνθρωπος* “in Acts repeatedly introduces new characters who are unbelievers when they are introduced (3:2; 8:9, 27; 10:1 14:8; 16:9).”⁹⁰² Thus, *ἄνθρωπος* in Acts 8:27 is signalling

⁹⁰² Schnabel, *Acts*, 282.

the introduction of an unbeliever of the Jesus Way. But he is an ‘unbelieving’ kinsman – likely a Jew, given the literary construction – who is open to new possibilities of joining. In which case, Luke appears to be subordinating the masculinity force of the gloss that *ἀνὴρ* offers in favour of an ethnoreligious kinship. The diasporic Afroasiatic kinship of the Ethiopian eunuch is being plausibly foregrounded to introduce a promising new believer.

To prod this literary strategy of Luke further, in light of the politics of the intersectionality of gender, race, sexuality and class of the Ethiopian eunuch, a convivial reading of kinsmanship connotes not only a socio-religious site of belonging but one of representation. In other words, his kinsmanship reinforces his hospitable means of affectability to sections of Luke’s immediate readership as an Afroasiatic brother whose relationship is fondest due to his absence among them. He is a diasporic brother, representing the Ethiopian kingdom, who is also about to share in the prosperous good news of the ‘The Way’.

4.3.1.3 Eunuch (Εὐνοῦχος) Traditions

Why then is a eunuch the representative of Ethiopia in Luke’s stratagem? This question points to the third literary marker of the trope of representation, *εὐνοῦχος*, which may accommodate modes of Jewishness. A secondary word, *σπάδων*, is used in the Septuagint, specifically in reference to Potiphar in Gen. 37:36 and Isaiah 39:7. The assumption is, however, that since the Ethiopian is a (castrated) eunuch he could not have been a fully-fledged Jew. *Εὐνοῦχος*, for all the systemic domination it connotes in terms of sexuality and gender, means that the Ethiopian eunuch putatively cannot be a fully-fledged Jew. However, as will be seen, (Jewish) eunuchs functioned throughout the life of Judaism.

Allusions have already been made to his education, abilities and devotion. The question of whether he was a literal eunuch, however, is a contested one.⁹⁰³ Most modern scholarship identifies him as a castrated prepubescent eunuch – rendering him typically beardless, tall and portly – the corollary of which would strictly preclude him from being a Jew, especially in light of Deut. 23:1, “No one whose testicles are crushed or whose penis is cut off shall be admitted to the assembly of the LORD (יְהוָה בִּקְהָל, 23:2; εἰς ἐκκλησίαν κυρίου)”. (Cf. Lev. 21:20.) The Mishnah also enforces this interpretation as a Deuteronomic ban against eunuchs (*m. Yeb. 8:1-2*). Even Josephus corroborates this as a ban in *Ant.* 4:290-91, as well as Philo in *Spec. Leg.* 1:324-25. Thence, conceptually in Acts the eunuch could be seen as a marginal of the marginalised, where questions of virility are raised or, for that matter, that of sterility and of a complicated gender, not least dubious sexuality.

However, neither Deut. 23:1 nor Lev. 21:20 make any explicit reference to a eunuch. They do not contain the Hebrew word, קָרִים, which LXX translates as εὐνοῦχος. There are plausibly other reasons for genital mutilation: “genital mutilation could occur for religious reasons, accidentally/ congenitally, or as a punitive measure”.⁹⁰⁴ Wright and Chan not only make this point, but conclusively show that Isaiah 56:1-8 is an eschatological promise for foreigners

⁹⁰³ Eunuchs tend to be biblically defined through the key of Matthew 19:12 – “For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can.” This was given in response to the question posed by the disciples (v. 10), “It is better that they should not marry.” However, this ought not be understood only as a social injunction (as well as sexual) where they become marginal in regard to family, cult, possessions, posterity, and public approval. Matthew indeed combines this call to marginality with an eschatological promise of reward and status in league with Isaiah 56:3b-5; Wis. 3:14. Susanna Asikainen, “Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven”: Matthew and Subordinated Masculinities’, in *Biblical Masculinities Foregrounded*, ed. by Ovidiu Creanga and Peter-Ben Smit (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2014), 156–88. Matthew, indeed combines this call to marginality with an eschatological promise of reward and status in league with Isaiah 56:3b-5; Wis 3:14.

⁹⁰⁴ See Herodotus, *Histories* 3.32; Martha T. Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 1997), noting the citations of the Middle Assyrian Laws A §15 and A §20 (pp. 158, 160).

and eunuchs.⁹⁰⁵ The former will enjoin worship in the temple with God's people, while the latter – our main concern – will reclaim their progeny and name for posterity. The Isaianic hope is not an abrogation of Deut. 23:2 as some scholars hold.⁹⁰⁶ It does not upend the Deuteronomic prohibition. The eunuch is not promised re-entry into the cultic worship of the temple. This is only promised to the foreigner. The eunuch is instead promised a name for progeny and posterity. In which case, the focus of scholars on centring the prohibition of Deut. 23:1 as the basis for the eunuch's longing is misguided, at best, and misleading, at worst.

Commentaries on the type of eunuch the Ethiopian could be appear to miss out on 'connected histories' and perspectives that may make better sense of his standing. Their histories appear to be based on Graeco-Roman exceptionalism. That is, since Luke's audience were Greek speaking with Hellenic sensibilities, their construal of all things Jewish (or potentially Afroasiatic) was framed within a Hellenist commodification of history. The vast majority of literature on Acts plays to this ethnocentric gaze.⁹⁰⁷ Burke's important work among them, *Queering*

⁹⁰⁵ Wright and Chan, 'King and Eunuch', 101. In making their point about the fortunes of the eunuch, but in response to notions of interpretations of Deut. 23:1, Wright and Chan state that in Isaiah 56 "the eunuchs themselves do not enter the temple; rather, the deity grants them a monument there. What troubles this group is instead the perennial problem posed by their impotence. Their cry, "I am but a dried-up tree" (v. 3b), uses an arboreal metaphor to express their inability to sire children and produce a namesake (cf. Jer. 11:19; see also Ps 1:3; Jer. 17:7-8)" (p. 101).

⁹⁰⁶ For supporters of the abrogation function of Isaiah 56, see Joachim Schaper, 'Rereading the Law: Inner-Biblical Exegesis of Divine Oracles in Ezekiel 44 and Isaiah 56', in *Recht und Ethik im Alten Testament. Beiträge des Symposiums 'Das Alte Testament und die Kultur der Moderne' anlässlich des 100. Geburtstags Gerhard von Rads (1901-1971) Heidelberg, 18.-21. Oktober*, ed. by Bernard M. Levinson and Eckart Otto (Münster: Lit, 2004), 133; Peter Mallen, *The Reading and Transformation of Isaiah in Luke-Acts*, Library of New Testament Studies, 367 (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 109, 122, 150, 167, 177; Steven S. Tuell, 'The Priesthood of the "Foreigner": Evidence of Competing Politics in Ezekiel 44:1-14 and Isaiah 56:1-8', in *Constituting the Community: Studies on the Polity of Ancient Israel in Honor of S. Dean McBride, Jr.*, ed. by John T. Strong and Steven S. Tuell (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 193; Saul M. Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible: Interpreting Mental and Physical Differences* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 11-2, 84-5.

⁹⁰⁷ For how the *Tendenz* of the influential volume of essays on the masculinity in Acts is transfixed for the Graeco-Roman gaze, see *Reading Acts in the Discourses of Masculinity and Politics*, ed. by Eric Barreto, Matthew L. Skinner, and Steve Walton, Library of New Testament Studies (London; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017). See also Kartzow and Moxnes, 'Complex Identities', 184-204; Brittany E. Wilson, 'Neither Male nor Female', 403-22; Brittany E. Wilson, *Unmanly Men*, 117-36. Cf. Mikeal Carl Parsons, *Body and*

the Ethiopian Eunuch: Strategies of Ambiguity in Acts, does the same thing and for good reason.⁹⁰⁸ In a previous publication, he states that since the usage of εὐνοῦχος in Hellenistic and Second Temple Greek texts referred to a castrated male, then his rubric for construing the Ethiopian eunuch's masculinity is Graeco-Roman. "In fact," he continues,

I have not been able to find one example in Greek texts from the fifth century B.C.E. to the second century C.E. or in Greek-Jewish texts from the second century B.C.E. to the first century C.E. in which εὐνοῦχος was used to refer to a person who was clearly not castrated.⁹⁰⁹

Here, Burke privileges the Graeco-Roman gaze to be all things human. In so doing, he occludes the perspective of other – and arguably closer – 'connected histories' and of the Hebrew bible's majority witness to the eunuch being foregrounded as a chamberlain or official.⁹¹⁰ Given the attachment that Luke's audience would have had with the Hebrew bible, which on the main tends to privilege the higher-class status (or profession) of the eunuch over his physical status, they might have conceivably situated the Ethiopian eunuch as such. This does not negate the queering function he might have had for the said audience, in light of the arguments that Burke ably makes, but it does hold as highly significant the Ethiopian eunuch's special intersectionality.⁹¹¹ Burke's assumption

Character in Luke and Acts: The Subversion of Physiognomy in Early Christianity (Baker Academic, 2006), 123–41.

⁹⁰⁸ Burke, *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch*, 175–89.

⁹⁰⁹ Burke, 'Queering Early Christian Discourse: The Ethiopian Eunuch', 178.

⁹¹⁰ While not negating the possible condition of castration, eunuchs in the Hebrew bible tend to be of high status given their administrative roles in the royal courts. See Retief and Cilliers, 'Eunuchs in the Bible', 250–3.

⁹¹¹ Nevertheless, as a cultural document the book of Acts cannot deny its patriarchal inscription as a gendered text. In light of this, I find Hemmings helpful: "A feminist epistemology that maintains a priori assumptions about what constitutes gendered or sexual experience, and thus subjective location, is necessarily attuned only to dominant gendered and sexual subject formations, and is ill-equipped to produce ethical research on subjects whose knowledges are produced from a variety of different social locations" – Clare Hemmings, *Bisexual Spaces: A Geography of Sexuality and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 38.

appears to be that the historical-religious imagination of a Greek speaking audience of Acts would primarily be refracted through a Graeco-Roman literate gaze, even if they were Jewish.⁹¹² This is problematic on at least two counts. One, a Greek literate reading audience need not be translated into a homogenous Greek audience; they could be a Hellenistic Semitic audience. If anything, a Greek facing audience would be contingently reflective of a heterogeneous Greek speaking audience some of whom would be Semitic. Two, a Greek literate audience is not necessarily ignorant of ‘connected histories’ of perceptions of social identity and status different to theirs, even if misunderstood. In the least, as demonstrated in chapter 3, Luke as a postcolonial, cosmopolitan theologian would have conceivably been cognisant of ‘connected histories’.

To capture this point, the Ethiopian eunuch’s ethnoreligious and sociohistorical bearing cannot be had by simply looking at his story alone. Situating him in a broader context elucidates particular ways in which Luke’s posturing of him might be better understood. This, however, begs the question of why the broader connections of the literature of comparative religions and ‘connected histories’ are overlooked? Since they are neglected, the commentaries on his ethnoreligious and socio-political bearing are problematic, providing an inadequate account of the implication of his story for Luke. This must be more compelling the case as the Ethiopian eunuch is *eo ipso* African. As stated earlier, there is no denying of the powerful queering symbolism that Luke’s Ethiopian eunuch might evoke. However, the notion of ‘connected histories’, within the context of inculturation hermeneutics where we look to other histories connected to the Afroasiatic strip of eunuchs nearer the archetype of the Ethiopian eunuch, might help with elucidating other possibilities for understanding his eunuch identity and

⁹¹² As a consequence of an entirely Graeco-Roman facing optic, Burke asserts that there were two groups of eunuchs with which the audience of the book of Acts would have been most familiar, court eunuchs and the Roman *galli* in Burke, ‘Queering Early Christian Discourse’, 179–89.

signification. Within this section we will briefly but critically survey other derivative locations associated with the Ethiopian eunuch, offering in light of Subrahmanyam's 'connected histories' a plausibly inclusive perspective of his social location. They are the eunuchic traditions of Assyria, the Graeco-Roman world, Judaism and the Hebrew bible.

4.3.1.3.1 Assyrian

The eunuch of ancient Assyria perhaps enjoys the longest history of traditions, beginning in the Neo-Assyrian period of the tenth century BCE. It provided the Akkadian *sha reshi* from which the Hebrew word סָרִיס (sārîs) is derived. Before then, castration was deemed as punishment for adultery and sodomy.⁹¹³ However, by the tenth-ninth century BCE, eunuchs, typically prepubescent, attended to the administration of the monarchy as civil servants and the provinces as governors. They were also often soldiers – even generals of their own armies.⁹¹⁴ This is significant for the “homomartial gaze” which defined “one’s masculine value as achieved through military prowess in the eyes of other males – a worthy performance on the battle field is far from effeminizing.”⁹¹⁵ Their power is also attested to their display of attire being almost identical to the hyper-masculine monarch.⁹¹⁶ This is in spite of the stigma of their beardlessness, for wearing beards was typically a visible symbol of masculinity.⁹¹⁷ In reliefs of

⁹¹³ Roth, *Law Collections*, 158.

⁹¹⁴ *Queries to the Sungod: Divination and Politics in Sargonid Assyria*, ed. by Ivan Starr, State Archives of Assyria Series (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1990).

⁹¹⁵ Cynthia R. Chapman, *The Gendered Language of Warfare in the Israelite-Assyrian Encounter* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 20–59.

⁹¹⁶ Julian Reade, ‘Fez, Diadem, Turban, Chaplet: Power-Dressing at the Assyrian Court’, in *Of God(s), Trees, Kings, and Scholars: Neo-Assyrian and Related Studies in Honour of Simo Parpola*, ed. by Mikko Luukko, Saana Svärd, and Raija Mattila (Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society, 2009), 238–64; Karlheinz Deller, ‘The Assyrian Eunuchs and Their Predecessors’, in *Priests and Officials in the Ancient Near East: Papers of the Second Colloquium on the Ancient Near East – The City and Its Life, Held at the Middle Eastern Culture Center in Japan (Mitaka, Tokyo). March 22–24, 1996*, ed. by Kazuko Watanabe (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1999), 303–11.

⁹¹⁷ Chapman, *The Gendered Language*, 39.

that period, it is common to see the eunuch standing second in line behind the king, which according to Irene Winter was an indication of their social rank.⁹¹⁸ This would not be surprising given that they were the personal body guards of the king and queen. Their masculinity, due to the power invested in them, was in one sense deemed superior to other males, not only by their rank in the palace, but by the spaces awarded them. They, like the queen, had their own palace wing.⁹¹⁹ Even in death the leading eunuch in rank was honoured with the highest civilian burial in the land, overseen personally by the king, just as the king's burial was overseen by the highest ranked eunuch.⁹²⁰ Even their texts make supernatural overtures about them. Yet, in another sense, the honour of their masculinity was visibly moot by their beardlessness.

In sum, right to the end of the Neo-Assyrian period the “genealogical isolation” of the eunuch qualified him to serve and protect the king.⁹²¹ Attending to the queen's chambers was important but secondary to that of the king. The eunuch held supreme trust because he was not seen as a danger to the royal lineage. He protected the purity of the royal line, which was unbroken for over a thousand years.⁹²² The stigma with the Assyrian eunuch was not his masculinity, sexuality or virility, but his inability to father children. To compensate for this huge

⁹¹⁸ Irene Winter, *On Art in the Ancient Near East: From the Third Millennium BCE* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 2:85–107.

⁹¹⁹ Simo Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars*, State Archives of Assyria, X (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1993), Letter SAA 10, 247.

⁹²⁰ Reade, ‘Power-Dressing at the Assyrian Court’, 253–4.

⁹²¹ Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 319–20.

⁹²² George Rawlinson, *The Five Great Monarchies of the Ancient Eastern World; Or, The History, Geography, and Antiquities of Chaldaea, Assyria, Babylon, Media, and Persia* (London: Scribner, Welford and Company, 1871), 44.

shortcoming, prominent eunuchs were memorialised by the king with the instalment of a stele bearing their name as if for posterity.⁹²³

This tradition continued into the Babylonian empire, but not on the same scale. Later it continued into the Persian Empire where they were permitted to be married.⁹²⁴ There was, however, a significant additional role in the serving of the goddess and her temple.⁹²⁵ Unlike the Neo-Assyrian period where information about eunuchs were self-generated from artefacts such as letters, inscriptions and stelae, material about eunuchs in the Persian period are from secondary sources such as classical (e.g., *inter alios*, Xenophon, Herodotus, Ctesias, Quintus Curtius, Plutarch, and Diodorus) and biblical sources (e.g., Daniel, Esther and Nehemiah). From these are positive and negative views about eunuchs, which we further trace in the later Graeco-Roman period.

4.3.1.3.2 Graeco-Roman Eunuchs

As noted above, the optic through which Burke treats the Ethiopian eunuch is Graeco-Roman. The characteristics of the discourse need not be detailed but summarised. The eunuch tradition was largely imported from Phoenicia, though initially as a social status statement. Instead of having slaves, foreign, exotic eunuchs were deemed more fashionable. The role of eunuchs in the royal palace as confidanté officials only began to take root in the second century CE. What particularly fascinated the commentators of the first century was the eunuch's aesthetic and sexual dimension.⁹²⁶ In fact, apart from a brief moment under the

⁹²³ Wright and Chan, 'King and Eunuch', 106.

⁹²⁴ Tadmor, 'Was the Biblical sārîs a Eunuch?', 321.

⁹²⁵ Cristiano Grottanelli, 'Faithful Bodies: Ancient Greek Sources on Oriental Eunuchs', in *Self, Soul, and Body in Religious Experience*, ed. by Albert I. Baumgarten, Jan Assmann, and Guy G. Stroumsa (Leiden; Boston; Köln: Brill, 1998), 405.

⁹²⁶ Shaun Tougher, 'The Aesthetics of Castration: The Beauty of Roman Eunuchs', in *Castration and Culture in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Larissa Tracy (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 2013), 60–1. Here Tougher draws reference to how Domitian's eunuch, Earinus, was so famous that people wrote about him, comparing him to heroic mythical figures such as Apollos and Lyaeus (Bacchus) of Nisus and Achilles, and even to a

reign of Claudius, Roman citizens were not allowed to be eunuchs till much later. They went on to serve as treasurers.⁹²⁷ However, priestly eunuchs (*galli*, plural) from the Phrygian cultic practice of worshipping the goddess, Cybele (and her husband Attis), began to capture the imagination of Greek poets and playwrights in the early third century BCE.⁹²⁸ This was the cult of the Great Mother and its devoted eunuchs, whose dress and deportment took on the mannerisms of women, were met with (Greek) amusement and (Roman) contempt.⁹²⁹ They were deemed as “unmanly priests”, inferior and harmless.⁹³⁰ While Burke suggests that the *galli* phenomenon was widespread throughout the Roman empire, it is hardly likely that the *practice* was that prevalent in the first century as their spectacle was only seriously propagated in the second and third centuries through the Roman works of the second century playwrights and satirists, Apuleius and Pseudo-Lucian.⁹³¹ In any case, “all the mentions of the *galloi* in Hellenistic Greek literature refer to Asian priests”, who were highly prejudiced against.⁹³² There was resistance to their open practice in Rome until the second century CE.⁹³³

beautiful boy called, Ganymede, the Phrygian, whom Jupiter abducted, where sexual desire is intimated.

⁹²⁷ The first century Greek biographer and essayist, Plutarch, associates eunuchs commonly with treasurers as part of the Graeco-Roman tradition. See Plutarch *Demetrius* 25:5; Plutarch, *Lives: Demetrius and Antony, Pyrrhus and Gaius Marius*, trans. by Bernadotte Perrin, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1920).

⁹²⁸ Lynn E. Roller, ‘The Ideology of the Eunuch Priest’, *Gender & History* 9.3 (2002): 542–559.

⁹²⁹ Marika Rauhala, ‘Obscena Galli Praesentia: Dehumanizing Cybele’s Eunuch-Priests through Disgust’, in *The Ancient Emotion of Disgust*, ed. by Donald Lateiner and Dimos Spatharas (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 235–52. An example of Roman contempt is Terence, *Eunuch*, 695, where the eunuch is described as a monster.

⁹³⁰ Rauhala, ‘Obscena Galli Praesentia’, 238.

⁹³¹ Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 8.24–49; Pseudo-Lucian, *Lucius* or *The Ass* 35–41.

⁹³² Rauhala, ‘Obscena Galli Praesentia’, 243.

⁹³³ It is important to point out that the *galloi* bore some resemblance to the *assinnu*, *kurgarru* and *kulu’u* of the cult of Ishtar in Assyria – men who likewise dressed like women and behaved in the similitude of the Roman *galloi*. These Assyrians were contradistinctively different to the *sha reshi* eunuchs of respectable Assyrian society. See A. K. Grayson, ‘Eunuchs in Power: Their Role in the Assyrian Bureaucracy’, in *Vom Alten Orient Zum Alten Testament: Festschrift Für Wolfram Freiherrn von Soden Zum 85. Geburtstag Am 19. Juni 1993*, ed. by Manfred Dietrich and Oswald Loretz, *Alter Orient Und Altes Testament*, 40 (Kevelaer:

Thus, an exclusive Graeco-Roman facing audience would have been negatively conflicted about eunuchs, even the Ethiopian eunuch. His grand introduction in Acts 8:27 would have been met with disgust and contempt. But such an audience would have come much later than Luke's initial, ideal audience. To a first-hand hostile audience, the audacious, literary entry of the Ethiopian eunuch – “And oh, an Ethiopian kinsman, court official eunuch of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of her entire treasury” – would have been ridiculously prohibitive and therefore counterproductive. This would have been all the more transgressive in the following clause and tale: “He had gone to worship in Jerusalem”. My point is, that these two clauses were not necessarily an implacably shattering dissonance for Luke's ideal audience because they were a diasporic Hellenistic, Jewish audience with cosmopolitan proclivities. Instead, 8:27 would have had the rhetorical effect of affectability and endearment. The initial audience would have seen the Ethiopian eunuch from a charitable disposition. I propose that received traditions closer to home, such as their Hebrew traditions, in the case of Luke's primary audience, would have been more prevalent and impressionable. For this reason, Afroasiatic Hebrew and Second Temple traditions should be looked at more closely.

Unfortunately, Carson also panders to a Graeco-Roman facing audience with his adoption of a fifth century Roman eunuch as a model for the agency of the Ethiopian eunuch. Here, Carson sees Claudian's fourth/fifth century account of the consul eunuch, Eutropius, as pivotal to the Church Fathers' rhetorical construct of the Ethiopian eunuch. Claudian's *In Eutropium* highlights the reaction given to the eunuch Eutropius' assumption of his consulship of the Eastern Empire. Eutropius was publicly humiliated during a debate that slandered his sexuality rendering his political mobility impotent and arguably

Neukirchen-Vluyn: Butzon & Bercker, 1995), 94.

leading to his suicide. However, Carson does helpfully suggest that this might have informed the socio-political context of the Church Fathers in their commentary on the Eunuch on the Ethiopian Eunuch's story.⁹³⁴

In short, the exceptionalism of the Graeco-Roman facing optic does not best suit the imaginary of Luke's Jewish-sympathetic audience, largely because the Graeco-Roman version of the eunuch phenomenon had not sufficiently taken root nor matured as practice in the first century empire. Their experience of eunuchs might have been differently influenced, possibly by their own Jewish traditions. Burke's and Carson's insistence on the Graeco-Roman imaginary, however, does raise the question of whether there is a pandering to Graeco-Roman bias by modern whiteness due to its hegemonic hold as the origin and basis for later Western (Christian) civilisation. In light of the politics of the eunuch's intersectionality, the epistemic vector of whiteness as embodied and performed through the Graeco-Roman facing gaze is imperiously oppressive of the eunuch's gender identity, due, in part, to its presumption as the privileged optic, and its consequent negligence of 'connected histories'. In which case, there is an implausible reading back into an Afroasiatic story a structured Graeco-Roman epistemology that might be somewhat alien to the Afroasiatic and Semitic experience of Luke's day. That is not to say, that Graeco-Roman notions of the eunuch were not influential on Luke's ideal audience. But to suggest that it was their dominant or exclusive epistemology amounts to being misleading.

4.3.1.3.3 Hebrew and Judaism Tradition

Given that Luke's style is in the similitude of the Hebrew bible and Septuagint,⁹³⁵ and his message at its behest, it is not unlikely that his perspective of the

⁹³⁴ Cottrel R. Carson, "Do You Understand What You Are Reading?", 12.

⁹³⁵ Schnabel, *Acts*, 24.

Ethiopian eunuch had the force of a Hebrew worldview of eunuchs, which itself seemed to be particularly influenced by the ‘connected histories’ of Assyria, and to a lesser extent, Persia. In which case, it should prove instructive to analyse the horizon in which the Hebrew bible sculpts its picture of the eunuch, bearing in mind the influences from Assyrian eunuchic practices, which we have already garnered. The Graeco-Roman facing optic is especially not sufficient enough.

Although there is enormous literature addressing the issue of the nature of the eunuch in the Hebrew bible – whether as עֲרֵיץ, or εὐνοῦχος and σπάδων in LXX – a definitive adjudication is elusive. We continue to see this indetermination in Jewish texts, even through to the Second Temple period. Notwithstanding references to the office of the eunuch (Gen. 40:7; 2 Kings 23:11; Judith 12:11; Josephus *Ant.* 16.8.1), some – such as Wisdom 3:14; Matt. 19:12; *m. Yebam.* 8:4 – view the eunuch in terms of his infertility or origin. Others – such as Sirach 20:4; 30:20; Philo *Allegorical Interpretations* 3.236; Philo *Drunkenness* 210-211; Philo *Unchangeable* 111 – focus on his sexuality and gendered ambiguity. With the exception of Isaiah 56:3-5 and Wisdom 3:14, which are thematically very similar, these examples tend to invoke the eunuch figuratively. However, there are enough citations to suggest that Jewish eunuchs were present and active in the life of Judaism, even as a status symbol.⁹³⁶ The question of whether they were literally eunuch or strictly non-castrated civic officials remains debatable. The *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* puts it this way:

Two socially contrasting classes are indicated by the term *saris*. The first includes distinguished officials at the royal court (1 Ch. 28:1), the second the group of castrates excluded from the community at large (Isa. 56:3). Because neither two separate etymologies nor a semantic change in one or the other direction can be persuasively demonstrated, one cannot determine whether

⁹³⁶ Anna Krauthbauer, Stephen Llewelyn, and Blake Wassell, ‘A Gift of One Eunuch and Four Slave Boys: P.Cair.Zen. I 59076 and Historical Construction’, *JSJ* 45.3 (2014): 305–325.

this semantic ambivalence involves genuine homonymy on the one hand, or polysemy on the other prompted by extremely divergent semantic development.⁹³⁷

This statement assumes that the two divergent meanings are mutually exclusive because of their inability to inhere within one person. However, the data seems to suggest that the Hebrew eunuch intersectionally constituted both positions, where the balance was contingent on the context. Hence, קָרִים appears to be a floating composite signifier of a hybridised, ambivalent masculinity. Like the Assyrian tradition before it, eunuchs in the Hebrew bible held positions of power (Potiphar in Gen. 37:36; 39:1), commanded soldiers (2 Kings 25:19; Jer. 52:25), were ranked with officials and priests of Judah and Jerusalem (Jer. 34:19) and were in attendance of queens (as in Jezebel in 2 Kings 9:32). Yet, besides being associated with royal circles as these references suggest, there seemed to have been some stigma attached to eunuchism – as implied in the eschatological promise of Isaiah 56:3 in terms of an honorific reparation for their fatherlessness.

Instead of holding the castrated eunuch and official eunuch in a binaristic, mutually exclusive opposition, it is viable to hold these identities intersectionally in tension. T. M. Lemos provides an explanation for holding these identities in tension from the field of social anthropology and psychology, where she looks at Black masculinity in USA as a pattern for construing multiple, paradoxical identities in the same person.⁹³⁸ What is instructive for Lemos is the way that

⁹³⁷ Benjamin Kedar-Kopfstein, 'sārīs', *TDOT*, 345.

⁹³⁸ T. M. Lemos, "Like the Eunuch Who Does Not Beget': Gender, Mutilation and Negotiated Status in the Ancient Near East," in *Disability Studies and Biblical Literature*, ed. Candida R. Moss and Jeremy Schipper (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 56–8. See for example, Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 310, who states: "But the εὐνοῦχος of LXX, like both εὐνοῦχος and קָרִים elsewhere, frequently denotes high political or military officers; it does not necessarily indicate castration". Jervell, *Theology of Acts*, 270–71, does the same. He suggests that the Ethiopian is one who by his position functions as a celibate and thus is symbolically a 'eunuch'. On the other hand, Gerd Petzke argues that if the eunuch was indeed symbolic there would be no need to call him a eunuch, as verse 27 does. So, a literal eunuch is likely in view. Gerd Petzke, 'Εὐνοῦχος', *EDNT*, 2:81.

Black masculinity is both repellent (thuggish stereotype) and alluring (hypersexualised stereotype) at the same time, where the balance is contingent on the social context. In the same way, she suggests, this was the parallel case for ancient eunuchs where stereotypes of meanings were superimposed on their body, producing shifting, antagonistic feelings of repugnance and allure. For Lemos, the ascription of negative stereotypes to the eunuch escalated antipathy towards them to the extent that in time the postexilic Leviticus and Deuteronomy codes were written to institutionalise their marginalisation.⁹³⁹

Viewing the Ethiopian eunuch through the analytical tool of intersectionality, however, may usefully serve to extend Lemos's point further. Intersectionality as the interlocking systems of domination would uncover attempts at one-dimensionally compartmentalising and essentialising the eunuch. This could account for the unitary effeminising or unmanly gaze on the eunuch, for example. Moreover, if we take, as theorised in chapter 1, intersectionality as a composite of differentiations, the different vectors of oppression should be seen to seize the eunuch in terms of his differentiated identities. It is the exploitation of the differences that produces the epistemic violence. Therefore, inequality is the product of this differentiation. To separate his sexual identity from his professional identity is to exploit an artificially constructed differentiation. His eunuchism is indissolubly constituted and characterised by his sexuality and role. He is always a castrated eunuch and a professional official at the same time. This is the power of his eminence. Then, what we have in the descriptions of and references to eunuchs in antiquity are historical, cultural, psychic and tradition-building vectors, which are constitutives of the power of the ancient gaze. In this vein, the rhetorically sonorous entrance of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:27 seem to conjure up mystique, ambivalence, admiration, affection and curiosity in

⁹³⁹ Lemos, 'Like the Eunuch Who Does Not Beget', 59.

Luke's ideal reader, all at once. This should not negate the eligibility of the eunuch being a fully-fledged Jew. While it may complicate his Jewishness in some ways, it could moreover enhance his capability and agency as a Jew in other ways.

4.3.1.4 Priestly Eunuch?

Already, the hermeneutic of 'critical conviviality' has opened up new possibilities for construing the extent of the agency of the Ethiopian eunuch. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to make a conclusive case for the full extent of the identity of the Ethiopian eunuch. We were simply raising the question of why he could not be construed as a fully-fledged Jew, especially when viewed through a different epistemological lens. However, one possibility of yet another dimension of his subjectivity in light of the notion of representation could be raised by the question, why him as a representative? At the behest of the Assyrian legacy in the Afroasiatic region, it might be noted that eunuchs of the royal court were viewed as mystical, powerful figures, not only because of their proximity to the throne in that they had the ear of the sovereign, but because they were made to preside over the political and sometimes religious affairs of the kingdom. Viewing this reality convivially, it could be reasonably tendered that although the eunuch is characterised as presiding over the empire's treasury and probably much else, his possible status as a spiritual leader is possibly what qualified him from the Ethiopians' point of view to represent his empress and people on this significant pilgrimage.

His possible agency as a priestly eunuch is worth mentioning given the uneven references to eunuch from the Hebrew and Jewish tradition, and that his identity as a eunuch could have conceptually been different in Jerusalem, the diaspora and especially Ethiopia. As seen above, eunuchs held different interpretative meanings for the Jews – as disfigured victims of violence, familyless, sexually ambiguous, socially downtrodden and enslaved, the childless, the publicly

maligned and cultically impure, but also as privileged, educated, politically powerful, aristocratic, elite and a patron. This conflation of polarities would constitute in one person the existential edge of complex and contradictory realities, the force of which may evince a persona of mystery. Nevertheless, it would also afford the estimation of a eunuch's identity as contingent on where he lived in the diaspora, and the traditions that developed differently in those local vectors of contingencies.

Therefore, while by the time of Luke, the eunuch might have been conceptualised as marginalised in Jerusalem, he could conceivably have been viewed with admiration in another part of the Afroasiatic region, even in Africa. For example, we know from Heliodorus's later novel in the fourth century, *Ethiopian Story*, that sages close to the Ethiopian throne as advisors – 'gymnosophists' (naked sages) – were of greater repute than the sages of Egypt. It would seem that sections of the aristocracy held a romantic notion of and closet admiration for eunuchs. Many were seen as potent mystical figures, a belief reinforced by the place some had at the right hand of kings and the consequent political power they wielded. It is difficult to extrapolate conclusively that this was the legacy of first century Ethiopian eunuch. However, it does suggest that different practices within the ambit of a variegated ethnoreligious diaspora might have solicited different interpretative positions. Indeed, a more nuanced reading of the material canvassed might render the eunuch not merely as ambiguous because of his sexuality, but mystical and spiritual because of his associated ethnicity and lack of perceived ancestry – no father or mother. Thus, to coin Spivak's phrase, the Ethiopian eunuch has "miraculating and miraculated agency".⁹⁴⁰

⁹⁴⁰ 'Bonding in Difference, interview with Alfred Arteaga (1993-94)', *The Spivak Reader*, 27.

4.3.1.5 Summary

To summarise this section, the historical treatment of the three literary markers of representation – Ethiopian (Αἰθίοψ), kinsman (ἀνὴρ) and eunuch (εὐνοῦχος) – as refracted through the lens of whiteness has routinely attracted vectors of interlocking systems of domination, which served to obfuscate any prospect of Jewish agency. The intersectional forces of race, kinship and sexuality/gender continue to mitigate against the ethnoreligious agency of his personhood. However, when his sociality is considered convivially in light of the notion of representation, it is viable that the collectivist context of other ‘connected histories’ contests a Graeco-Roman facing optic. Indeed, beyond such an optic there are opportunities for the Ethiopian eunuch to be construed as an African Jewish kinsman with priestly eunuch cum chamberlain duties of the kingdom of Ethiopia.

4.4 Chapter Summary

Even though Luke has a penchant for indulging the elite in an effort to display the burgeoning ἐκκλησία communities’ appeal to the upper echelons of society, he, given his own subcultural identity, cannot neglect the opportunity it affords. The iteration of the elite Ethiopian eunuch seems to provide an opportunity to invoke the “voices of otherness, marginality, gender, masculinity, and borderland”.⁹⁴¹ The performativity of the two tropes of pilgrimage and representation bear these out in an effort to render the significance of the plausibility of his Jewish ethnoreligion.

⁹⁴¹ The quote is borrowed from a description of the scholar, Manuel Villalobos Mendoza in *Bible Trouble: Queer Reading at the Boundaries of Biblical Scholarship*, ed. by Teresa J. Hornsby and Ken Stone, SemeiaSt 67 (Atlanta: SBL, 2011), 355.

Thus, the question, ‘why cannot the Ethiopian eunuch be a Jew?’ is vitiated. The hermeneutic of ‘critical conviviality’ allows us to image that the Ethiopian eunuch was on a diasporic pilgrimage, not as a tourist but as a devout Jew. As part of a community, he was totally invested in the sanctity of the Hebrew scriptures and its psychagogical affect, as captured in his devotional reading of the Isaiah scroll, which brought him personal gratification as portrayed in his baptism and immense joy upon the resumption of his journey home (Acts 8:39). The convivial processing of the two tropes has demonstrably subverted the performativity of whiteness in its effort to individualise the reading of the Ethiopian eunuch through a Cartesian optic. In this way, the Hebrew, Afroasiatic facing optic that ‘critical conviviality’ affords privileges the Ethiopian eunuch’s communal act of traversing systemic borders to join ‘The Way’.

The core work in this chapter, therefore, has shown how the hermeneutic of conviviality may point to theorising a plausible nonrabbinic Jewish ethnoreligious agency in answer to the question: why cannot the Ethiopian eunuch be a Jew? It has translated the ‘whiteness of journeying’ into the ‘conviviality of pilgrimage’ when inflected by its constitutive, hospitality, thereby opening up new possibilities presented by the collectivist contingency of diaspora. It also explored the performativity of representation to open up the epistemic intersectional spaces of Ethiopianness, kinsmanship and eunuchness. In so doing it served to disrupt different, constrictive conceptualities of the Ethiopian eunuch to allow for new spaces of conceptuality, such as considering him as a anointed, priestly eunuch.

CONCLUSION

BLACK LIVES MATTER

*An anti-Semite is inevitably anti-Negro.*⁹⁴²
–Frantz Fanon

Conclusion

From the outset, the dissertation problematised the notion of conceptuality within the Anglophone guild of biblical studies as a normalising, ideologically biased gaze structured by political, cultural and religious interests. All conceptuality is biased with ideological presuppositions. However, the dominant conventional hermeneutic of the guild has universalised itself as objective, detached and colour-blind. Approximated as the Bultmannian ‘right kind of philosophy’, this normative gaze was argued to be riddled with Cartesian blind spots, which are racialised, deodorised and clinicalised. In which case, the politics of the identity and agency of the Ethiopian eunuch needed to be the focus of the ethnoreligious question, ‘why cannot the Ethiopian eunuch be a fully-fledged Jew?’ This is a question not of identity politics *per se*, but of the ‘Hallian’ politics of identity. For this reason, the double-barrelled title, Ethiopian eunuch, was strategically maintained throughout this study in order to foreground his black body before a gaze that consumes it as colourless, savage and therefore meaningless. This insubordinate, political strategy set the tone to disrupt a teleologically Eurocentric, ethnoreligious sensibility. It is a way of saying, ‘black lives *do* matter’. Therefore, there are several major contributions that this dissertation offers.

⁹⁴² Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 92.

One, the force of whiteness as a literary tool, though predicated on the primacy of Graeco-Roman civilisation and dependant on ethnic and racial reasoning strategies, is emancipatory when deployed as an impulse of postcolonial criticism. The incidence of Africanness in the physical, ethnoreligious and epistemological landscape of first century Afroasiatic Judaism has been blindsided by whiteness's constitutive Cartesian episteme. Africanness could not prevail against whiteness. Africa is invisible; its impression redundant.⁹⁴³

Two, the ethnoreligious identity and agency decisively changed in the Patristic writings from a fully-fledged Jew to a Graeco-Roman Gentile facilitated by the *Adversus Judaeos* tradition. The dualism episteme of this ancient trope has a similar Cartesian-like epistemological constitution to the later whiteness optic and operates in a similar structural and discursive way. Haunted and slighted by the shifting spectre of proto-whiteness, then, the African body prevailed not in Jewish flesh, but within a few centuries, in the (ideal type) Graeco-Gentile prototype of purity and originarity. He is 'whitewashed', romanticised, exoticised, dogmatically commodified and civilised. In time, his 'black life' did not matter. He could not be a Jew. This represented a decisive shift in the early interpretation of the Ethiopian eunuch's identity.

Three, 'critical conviviality' arose as the new hermeneutical lens for reading the different world of ancient biblical data in order to reconstitute and recondition the Cartesian optic of whiteness. Driven by its constitutive epistemes of 'collectivist hospitality', 'connected histories', 'as if' and 'the carnivalesque', it was poised for the project of reconstruction, theorising a viable case for the plausibility of the Ethiopian eunuch's Jewish identity in Part 2 to be of a

⁹⁴³ Any manifest appearance of Africa is rationed as marginal to the Judaising optic – and this could well extend to Simon of Cyrene (Luke 23:26), Simon Niger and Lucius of Cyrene (Acts 13:1). This could in part be due to the fact that Luke is centrally concerned with the expansion of the gospel across Euroasiatic borders since he eventually follows Paul's story.

nonrabbinic, ‘Hebrew’ lineage. This anticipated the seminal moment of his crossing and subverting systemic borders. In effect, ‘critical conviviality’ enables a (re-)historicisation of different reception histories and the literary reading of the Ethiopian eunuch while opening up at the same time epistemological spaces to expose the politics of obfuscation. This excavation behind the historiography is key to the achievements of this dissertation. In which case, black lives *do* matter.

Four, ‘critical conviviality’ opens up conceptuality to reimagine two conceptual (and cultural) tropes – pilgrimage and representation – as literary signatures of Acts 8:26-40, where notions of hospitality (κολλάομαι, the Pentecostal hospitality verb of joining), the Ethiopian (Αἰθίοψ), the kinsman (Ἀνὴρ), the Priestly eunuch (Εὐνοῦχος), and the missiological intent of the Western reading are identified and developed. Each signature is inextricably (and intersectionally) interwoven sociopolitically with the status-conceptual trope of δυνάστης. Effectively, the force of the literary markers conspires to forge in his black body a ‘miraculating and miraculated Jewish agency’ that matters.

Five, there are plausible historical reasons for the Ethiopian eunuch to be envisaged as a ‘black African Jew’. This historiographical reality reinforces the existential question, ‘why is the Ethiopian eunuch persistently imaged as a non-fully-fledged Jew’? It therefore marks a historic, critical rehabilitation of the ethnographic identification of the Jewish Ethiopian eunuch and convivially ‘snatches’ from the deluded utopian, romantic notion of a white European Christian origins a reclaimed and crucially dynamic, conjunctural space of postcolonial blackness.⁹⁴⁴

⁹⁴⁴ There are traditions that tie the Ethiopian eunuch to a Hebrew sect that was either part of the so-called ‘lost tribes’ of Judah, or part of an ethnic conversion group from Yemen or even part of a tradition that goes back to Menelik, the purported son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. See the thirteenth century *The Kebra Nagast (The Glory of the Kings)*, ed. & trans. by Miguel F. Brooks (Kingston, Jamaica: LMH, 2001), 33. Then Acts 8 would be the final territory of the spread of the gospel among the Jews, albeit distant

Finally, six, the Ethiopian eunuch as a fully-fledged Jew completes the paradigmatic formula of Acts 1:8, where he represents the diasporic Jews – following Jerusalem, Judaea and Samaria – before pre-figuring the ‘end of the earth’. Luke’s priority is to bring deliberate closure to the Jewish ethnography of the (missional) narrative arc of Acts 1:8, before making a decisive ‘narrative turn’ to the Gentile ethnographic, missional trajectory. Only then will the Ethiopian story be seen for what it is: a symbol of the conversion of all Jewish people in the outer reaches of the diaspora, the conjunctural foreshadowing of the fulfilment of 1:8c as mission “to the end of the earth” and the originary moment that destabilises and decentres the subsequent hegemonic missional discourse of which Paul is made the protagonist. This latter trajectory of a missional movement not overlapping with the eventual European quest is altogether a southern quest to Africa. It leads the way (ἡ ὁδός) for the Ethiopian eunuch to *Ethiopianise* or indigenise the gospel, as it were, as opposed to being subjected to a particular (colonial) type of Christianisation.⁹⁴⁵ So, while Luke eventually follows Paul’s work, which takes the reader across the seas, he pauses for a significant while (still on the land) for an incursion made into the ends of the world, Africa.

In our final epigraph, Frantz Fanon asserts that the person who is against the Jew because of his race is inevitably against the black race. He does not assert the converse – that an ‘anti-Negro’ is inevitably an antisemite.⁹⁴⁶ Hence, his

kinspeople. But it helps only insofar as when the Ethiopian is seen as part ‘of all of Judaism’, i.e., a bridge between the Jews (including Samaria) and the Gentiles.

⁹⁴⁵ For an early, historical glimpse of the colonizing or institutionalising nature of Christianity seizable by a imperialistic project, see *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Volume 1, Origins to Constantine*, ed. by Margaret M. Mitchell and Frances M. Young (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006). This missional schema has framed the missional narrative and history of interpretation of the Christian West for almost 2000 years, sedimenting, as V. George Shillington is keen to observe, “the conviction of superiority of the dominant West down to the present time” – V. George Shillington, *An Introduction to the Study of Luke-Acts*, 2nd Rev. ed. (London; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 107.

⁹⁴⁶ There has historically been a close association in African American and American Jewish alliances especially in the search for civil liberty, where the former has been credited with being a precursor for the

unidirectional assertion betrays society's hierarchical assumption of race that is predicated on the visibility of race. The black person is dark, so (s)he epitomises 'Otherness' against the white skin of whiteness. This hypervisibility of the black is due to the corporeality of blackness that whiteness ascribes inclusive of hypersexuality, hyperpigmentation and hyper-presence – a convolution of inverted hyperbolism. To differing degrees, at different conjunctures, by different readerships, this phenomenon has been critically analysed throughout this dissertation in reply to the research question, 'why cannot the Ethiopian eunuch be imaged as a Jew?' It appears that in different eras of reception the corporeality of the Ethiopian eunuch elicited essentialised readings of his body that circumscribed opportunities and realities around his ethnoreligious identity and agency. Its slipperiness, as it were, has invoked the material question, 'do black lives matter'?

I opened the dissertation with Bultmann's notion of the 'right philosophy', which probably epitomises whiteness. Now I wish to close with Fanon, whose work likely epitomises 'critical conviviality'.⁹⁴⁷ Hopefully, my argument would have demonstrated that the process of conceptualisation ontologises, and is, itself, ontologised by histories, by contingences. Epistemology, then, does not come from a line of purified processes and mental reflection that can be reduced to formulae nor universalised in the form of or for whiteness. It is not an algorithmic episteme. This is why the Cartesian logic of whiteness is indicted here by Fanon's final, agonistic prayer: "O my body, make of me always a man who asks questions!"⁹⁴⁸ The Ethiopian eunuch's body asked questions. His body

latter – Marc Dollinger, *Black Power, Jewish Politics: Reinventing the Alliance in the 1960s* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2018).

⁹⁴⁷ Although Gilroy does not make an explicit link between the "Fanonian project" and conviviality, it is implicit in his pronouncement that Fanon's project is "humanism, justice, cosmopolitanism" – Gilroy, *After Empire*, 62.

⁹⁴⁸ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 181.

and history should not pre-empt any ‘conceptualisation’ that he *could be* a fully-fledged Jew. Then, epistemology is embodied; his pigmentation acknowledged; his body anointed; his ethnoreligion reclaimed.

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